Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Year 1

Laleh Bakhtiar

Critical Thinking and the Chronological Quran in the Life of Prophet Muhammad

The Year 1 of the Revelation (13 BH/610 CE)

Revised Edition

Introduction by Mohammad Hashim Kamali

Library of Islam

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The Year 1 of the Revelation

**Ramadan, Shawwal, Dhu al-Qada, Dhu al-Hajja 13 BH/
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PREFACE

EXPLANATION OF THE CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STUDIES TEXTBOOK SERIES

There are thirty books in this series. Books entitled *Book Year 1* to *Book Year 24* consist of one book for each year of the revelation. The chapters' or sections' signs (*ayat*) are presented according to the 558 *ruku* or sections of the 114 chapters of the Quran. They each include the relevant chapter (*surah*) or chapters (when they are short) or sections, *ruku* (when there are multiple sections in a particular chapter) in chronological order. The chapters are numbered according to the chronological order of the Quranic chapters provided by al-Azhar University as the officially accepted order of revelation. Each section (*ruku*) is followed by a commentary by one of the well-known commentators.

The Year 1, the present volume, known as the first year of the revelation, actually only covers four months of the Arabic calendar: Ramadan, Shawwal, Dhu al-Qada, Dhu al-Hajja 13 BH/August 17 (?)-November 23, 610 CE when the few early signs were revealed.

Books 25-28 are devoted to the Quranic stories of all other Prophets and Messengers in order of their dates. *Book 25: Adam, Cain and Abel, Enoch (Idris), Noah, Hud and the People of Aad; Saleh and the People of Thamud; Book 26: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Jacob (Israel), Joseph and Job; Book 27: Moses, Aaron, Children of Jacob (Israel), Jethro (Shuayb), Joshua, Khidr and Samuel; Book 28: David, Solomon, Elijah (Ilyas), Elisha (Alyasa), Jonah (Younis), Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl), Ezra (Uzayr), Dhul Qarnayn (Cyrus the Great or Alexander the Great), Luqman, Zechariah, John the Baptist (Yahya), Mary and Jesus.* The last two are: *Book 29: The Life of Prophet Muhammad from Birth to the Revelation* and *Book 30: Teacher's Manual.* The last, *Book 30,* has been prepared for the teacher's Lesson Plans.

At the beginning of each lesson, there is an exercise in critical thinking skills. These consist of one of the following: The Nine Intellectual Standards, The Eight Elements of Reasoning and The Seven Moral Traits. The Eight Elements contain thirty-five strategies. However there is no specific order as to how they should be learned and incorporated into our thinking process.

Once we understand the critical thinking skills and then apply them to the signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. Once the skills as presented in the Quranic message are put into practice with the grace of God, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behavior.

Each lesson is followed by questions for classroom discussion or for dialogue. At the end of each lesson there is an assessment/assignment for students to use while they are developing critical thinking skills as they hopefully learn HOW the Quran teaches critical thinking.

SOURCES

The sources for the history include the works of Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hashim, Waqidi, Ibn Sad and commentaries by Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn, Tustari and Sayyid Qutb. The sources for the commentaries of Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn and Tustari have been used with the permission of the publisher, the Royal Institute of Ahl al-Bayt in Jordan. They are available on their website www.altafsir.com.

The inclusion of excerpted commentaries (tafsir) by Sayyid Qutb's In the Shade of the Quran (available online) in this Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series is because Sayyid Qutb is considered by some extremist groups as their intellectual source. By including excerpts from his eighteen volume Quranic commentary, extremists cannot disclaim the importance of learning critical thinking as this series is to help young adults learn HOW to think using self-realization (tahqiq) and critical thinking (furqan) skills taught by the Quran. This in order to arm young adults with the ability to choose reason over any irrational extremist ideology that is presented to them.

TERMINOLOGY

All Quranic signs are translations from The Sublime Quran. For the Muslim, the Quran is the Word (Logos) of God. It is this Word of God that has inspired artists, artisans, poets, philosophers and writers, those who had been the exponents of Islamic culture and civilization for almost 1500 years. Yesterday and today's Muslim wants to know more about each Word that God chose for His revelation through the Quran. This realization, in turn, prompted the translation of The Sublime Quran, an attempt to give the sense of unity within the revelation to a non-Arabic speaking reader.

There are several points to note about the terminology used in the translation of the Quranic text and the commentaries.

1. The blessed Prophet did not bring a new religion; he came to confirm what was right in the messages of the previous Prophets. Does this translation speak to the universality of the Quran? The Quran tells the Prophet, the mercy to all of humanity, to speak to people in their own language. Following his example, in addition to the translation being unbounded by time, in several sensitive cases, the word chosen to translate an Arabic word is also of a universal or inclusive rather than a particular or exclusive nature. This adds to the broadening of the perspective and scope of the Quran so that it becomes inclusive rather than exclusive to one particular group of people. In other words, in this way a larger audience can relate to its message.

2. The actual word "Islam" comes from the verb, "to submit" (aslama), submission (sallama), and ones who submit (muslimun). The Quran refers to itself (the Quran) from the very beginning of the revelation (68:35).

3. As previously indicated, the four books (Book 25, Book 26, Book 27 and Book 28) are the stories of the other Prophets and Messengers mentioned in the Quran. While these stories do have lessons to be learned by the Prophet

and those who heard the revelations as well as for us today, they do not refer directly to Prophet Muhammad and his prophethood following the beginning of the revelation. What remains in these books of the Quranic signs in the 24 years of the chronological Quran relate directly to him, what he did and what he was told to say. This allows us to understand his life directly from the Quranic message, the Quranic Sunnah, without any interruption of the stories about previous Prophets and Messengers.

4. Most English translations of the Quran refer to the "Children of Israel." The word "Israel" when used in the Quran refers to Jacob, the patriarch of the children who followed him such as Joseph. Therefore, it should be the "Children of Jacob" as it appears in these texts.

5. The word "kufr" and "kafir" have been translated here as "ingratitude" and "ungrateful" where the context allows. This is the first meaning of the word and many of us in our lifetime have met Muslims who are "ungrateful." It is the ungrateful Muslims who practice intolerance by declaring anyone who says: Peace be upon you (as-salam alaykum) as a non-believer (with what is called takfir). In those cases, it would not be suitable to call them "unbelievers" or "infidels," but it is clearly appropriate to refer to them as being "ungrateful" and this would include the early Quraysh, ungrateful for God's revelation and prophethood of Muhammad, who ridiculed the Prophet and fought against the Quranic message of love, forgiveness and peace.

6. Yet another example of the use of inclusive language in an attempt to speak to people in their own language, is the use of God instead of Allah. Many English speaking Muslims, as well as many of the English translations of the Quran to date, use Allah when speaking English instead of God. The intention on the part of the speaker is to maintain a sense of piety. They feel that using Allah in English moves them in that direction. Many even claim that the word Allah cannot be translated.

However well-intentioned a person may be, when speaking English, the use of the word Allah instead of God, first of all, does not follow the Quranic verse that tells the Prophet to speak to people in their own language. Subsequently, it does not follow the Sunnah of the Prophet who did speak to people in their own language.

In addition, it creates a divide between Muslims who use the word and the English speaking people of various faiths to whom they are speaking. In effect, it creates the illusion that there is more than One God—Allah and God. The response of the English speaking person of another faith is to say: I do not understand your religion; you have a different God than I do and you call Him Allah.

It needs to be clearly explained to English speaking Muslims that, unlike what they may feel, they do not have a monopoly on the word Allah. Arabic speaking Christians and Arabic speaking Jews also refer to God as Allah. The Old Testament and New Testament, when translated into Arabic, use Allah for God.

English speaking Muslims, therefore, need to recall the message of the

Quran that God is One (tawhid). In addition, the Prophet did not bring a new religion but confirmed what was correct in the messages of previous Prophets, namely, that God is One. Finally, they need to follow the example of the Prophet, as the Quran says he is the model or example to be followed, by speaking to people in their own language.

7. The Arabic language, much like old English, has the second person singular (masculine: anta (where the verb ends in ka). The English equivalent is the subject: "thou" or the object: "thee" or the possessive: "thy." As these are no longer in common usage in English, wherever the original Arabic uses one of these terms, the word "**you**" or "**your**" appear in bold font so that the reader knows the original was the second person singular. When the Quran is speaking directly to the Prophet, it uses the pronoun "thee" or "thou" so it is an important distinction to make.

Using you (second person plural) is done to help English speaking readers, recognizing that using the second person plural pronoun you (masculine: antum where the verb ends in masculine: kum) for God is to intimate that God is plural, the only sin in the Quran that is unforgivable. By putting the pronoun **you** in bold font indicates the true intention.

8. For the Arabic word "ayah," the English word used in these texts is "sign" rather than the Biblical term, "verse."

9. Several of the signs were abrogated over time. However the indication of a sign being abrogated was done after the complete revelation of the Quran. Whether or not a sign was later abrogated does not change the fact that the first Muslims who listened to the Quran, heard the signs that may have later been said to have been abrogated and that a hafez of the Quran recites all the signs as they appear in the original Arabic revealed to the Prophet. Whatever signs scholars later determined to be abrogated are still part of the Quran and, therefore, are not relevant to learning to be a Quranic critical thinker, learning HOW to think.

10. The first number that appears when the Quranic Chapters begin refers to the chapter number in the chronological order of the revelation so that Quranic Chapter 110 which was the last to be revealed is number 114 in the chronological order.

11. It is to be noted that whenever the name of Muhammad, Prophet Muhammad or the Prophet are used, one may say a silent prayer of blessings for him.

CRITICAL THINKING• COMPONENT

Quranic critical thinking (furqan, discernment) is a process that analyzes how we think. It is a 3-step process: **I**: Quranic critical thinkers apply the **Nine Intellectual Standards** (logic, being definitive, connected, appropriate, have worthiness, include numerous viewpoints, have right judgment, clarity, being fair and just) to: **II**: **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** (point of view, purpose, questions, information, inferences, concepts, assumptions, implications): in order to develop: **III**: **The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** (belief in One God (tawhid), God-consciousness (taqwa), virtuous conduct (birr) or in-

tegrity through moral discipline, empowering constancy ('azm) and courage, persevering in goodness (sabara), love (hubb) or empathic altruism (ihsan) and being fair and just (rashad). The signs (ayat) in each section (ruku) teach any or every one of the **Nine Intellectual Standards** or any and every one of the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or any or every one of the **Seven Quranic Moral Traits.**

This is the key to critical thinking. We do not learn "what" to think, but, rather, "how" to think. Using the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** as an example, critical thinking can be summarized in the following sentence: Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** and consequences. We use **concepts,** ideas and theories to **interpret information** (data, facts and experiences) in order to **answer questions,** solve problems, and resolve issues.

The point of view in all cases is that of the Quranic message and the various individuals and groups that it addresses as this series is a course in Quranic Studies as well as a course in the chronological history of the life of the blessed Prophet (sira). Each student is encouraged to come up with his or her own questions and responses to those questions in order to learn how to become the Quranic critical thinker as the Quranic teaches us HOW to think.

It is important to note that there is no correct or incorrect answer. The important point is to go through the process with as many of the sections as one is able to do. Little by little, this will help each student or reader to develop into critical thinkers or "discerners" of the Quranic message creating a bond between them and the Quranic message.

Once we learn to analyze signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. It is important to note that the order of **The Nine Intellectual Standards** or **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or **The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** is not important. With the grace of God, once all are present, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behaviors.

THE NINE INTELLECTUAL STANDARDS

1. LOGIC (REASONABLE: 'AQALA, 'AQL)
2. DEFINITIVENESS (TO BE PRECISE: MUHKAMA)
3. CONNECTEDNESS (CONTAINING COMPLEXITIES AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS: (MUQTARIN)
4. APPROPRIATENESS (TO MAKE RELEVANT: SADID)
5. WORTHINESS (FOCUSING ON THE IMPORTANT, NOT TRIVIAL, TO BE SIGNIFICANT: AHL)
6. NUMEROUS OR MULTIPLE VIEWPOINTS: 'DHARA'A)
7. RIGHT JUDGMENT (RUSHD)

8. Clarity (understandable, to be clear: tabayyana)
9. Being Fair and Just ('aql, right-minded (rashad))

The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies

1. **Embodying a Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective (recollect, bear in mind, take for granted: tadhakkur)**
   - Thinking Independently
   - Developing Insight Into Ego-centricity or Socio-centricity
   - Exploring Thoughts Underlying Feelings and Feelings Underlying Thoughts
   - Developing Intellectual Curiosity
2. **Generating a Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective: (consider: ra'a)**
   - Clarifying Issues or Conclusions
   - Clarifying and Analyzing the Meanings of Words or Phrases
   - Reading Critically: Clarifying or Discerning the Sacred Text
   - Listening Critically: The Art of Silent Dialogue
3. **Raising Questions, Problems, Issues: (reflect: tafakkara)**
   - Practicing Discussion: Clarifying and Questioning Interpretations
   - Reasoning Dialogically: Comparing Interpretations
   - Reasoning Dialectically: Evaluating Interpretations Knowledge, Wisdom
   - Deep Questioning
4. **Using Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments (evidence: basirah)**
   - Developing Criteria for Evaluation: Clarifying Values and Standards
   - Analyzing or Evaluating Actions
   - Distinguishing Relevant From Irrelevant Information
   - Giving Reasons and Evaluating Evidence
5. **Making Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusion, Solutions (understanding: tabassur)**
   - Analyzing or Evaluating Arguments and Interpretations
   - Making Plausible Inferences or Interpretations
   - Recognizing Contradictions
   - Noting Significant Similarities and Differences
6. **Utilizing Concepts, Definitions, Principles, Models and Vocabulary (recall: idhdhakara)**
   - Comparing Analogous Situations: Reframing Insights to New Contexts
   - Developing One's Perspective: Creating or Exploring Arguments
   - Making Interdisciplinary Connections
   - Comparing and Contrasting Ideals with Actual Practice

THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING
7. MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PREPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED (OPINIONS: ZUNUN)
8. GENERATING IMPLICATIONS, CONSEQUENCES (PONDER, EVALUATE: TADABBUR)
GENERATING OR ASSESSING SOLUTIONS
EXPLORING IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES IN DETAIL

1. Embodying a **Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective** (Recollect, Bear in Mind, Take to Heart (*tadhakkur*)):Whenever we think, we think within a point of view. What is the Quranic point of view in these signs? Does the Quran follow universal intellectual values of clarity, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, logic, fairness?

2. Generating a **Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective** (Consider (*ra'a*)): My purpose in addressing the Quranic purpose in these signs is . . .? Know exactly what you are after. Make sure you are not operating with a hidden agenda and that your announced and real purposes are the same. Whenever we think, we think for a purpose. What is the Quran's fundamental purpose in revealing these signs? Are there multiple points of view?

3. Raising **Questions, Problems, Issues** (Reflect (*tafakkara*)): What is the key question I am trying to answer. State the question as clearly and precisely as you can. Details are very important.

4. Using **Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments** (Evidence (*basirah*)): Actively seek the information most relevant to the question. Include in that information options for action, both short-term and long-term. We use experiences, facts and data that the Quran gives us. What information does the Quran give in these signs? What information do I need to answer my question?

5. Making **Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusions, Solutions** (Understanding (*tabassur*)): After reasoning (discerning) the above points, decide what the best answer (conclusion) to the question is. What inferences, judgments or conclusions do these signs make? What are my most fundamental inferences or conclusions based on these Quranic signs?

6. Utilizing **Concepts, Theories, Definitions, Axioms, Laws, Principles, Models, Vocabulary** (Recall (*idhdhakara*)): The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are ... ? Figure out all significant ideas needed to understand and answer your question. You may need to analyze these concepts. Use a good dictionary. Inferences or conclusions are based on Quranic concepts and

theories. What is the most basic concept in my question? What Quranic terms have I learned?

7. Making **Assumptions, Presuppositions, Taking for Granted** (Opinions (*zunun*)): Some important assumptions I am using in my thinking are ... ? Figure out what you are taking for granted. Watch out for self-serving or unjustified assumptions. The Quranic point of view is based on some assumptions. What assumptions is the Quran using in its reasoning? What assumptions am I using in my reasoning from the Quranic revelation?

8. Generating **Implications, Consequences** (Ponder (*tadabbur*)): Evaluate options. Take into account the advantages and disadvantages of possible decisions before acting? What consequences are likely to follow from this or that decision? The Quranic assumptions and my assumptions lead to implications and consequences. What are the implications of the Quranic reasoning? What are the implications of my reasoning? Am I correct in understanding the Quranic implications?

THE SEVEN QURANIC MORAL TRAITS

1. BELIEF IN ONE GOD (TAWHID)
2. GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (TAQWA)
3. VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE (MORALLY OBLIGATED: QANATA, GOODNESS, BIRR)
4. EMPOWERING CONSTANCY, COURAGE (AZM)
5. PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS (STEADFAST: SABARA)
6. EMPATHIC ALTRUISM (LOVE, MERCY, COMPASSION: HUBB)
7. FAIRNESS (NOT SELF-SERVING OR EGO-CENTRIC: 'AQSATA)

*****

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

INTRODUCTION
READING THE SIGNS: A QURANIC PERSPECTIVE ON THINKING
BY MOHAMMAD HASHIM KAMALI

The Islamic notion of *aql* (intellect) embraces the faith dimension of knowledge that is also informed by ethical values (see Chapter III). The prevailing reading of the Quran on rationality consists of a coalition of faith and reason which is also cognizant of the metaphysical aspect of reality and the limits, therefore, of human reason. This may be said to be a dividing line between the Islamic and Western conceptions of rationality, especially in its post-Enlightenment context.

Thus, it is not accurate to draw a direct parallel between them, as was the case in the Islamic discourse of the colonial period wherein many Muslim writers greatly admired the Western conception of rationality. The twentieth century Islamic discourse has shown awareness of that difference as it began to comprehend the subtleties inherent in the Western lexicon on rationality and its cultural overtones.[1]

THE DIVINE SIGNS (*AYAT*)

The Quran teaches an essential doctrine of the *ayat* (God's signs in the universe) functioning as pointers to the providential purpose at all levels of creation. Thus the Quran makes frequent references such as 'signs for a people who understand—exercise their intellect'. This evidential role of the divine signs entails an accompanying demand placed upon humans to engage in a rational understanding of the signs and draw conclusions on the discovery of truth and correct guidance.

The human reception of the signs, thus, depends ultimately upon the integrity of reason, without which humans would be incapable neither of comprehending the signs nor of responding to their message. The more abundant is an individual's native endowment of reason, the greater is the possibility for him or her to attain a larger magnitude of understanding and a higher level of response.

The nexus between faith and reason thus constitutes the hallmark of intelligent Islamic spirituality, wherein human intellect and emotions are guided toward harmony with one another. The Quran repeatedly provokes its reciters to think about the signs of God in the universe and within themselves, to understand God's illustrious presence in them, and ultimately to vindicate the truth. The word *ayah* and its plural *ayat* occur in the Quran over 400 times, although the whole of the Quran introduces itself as a collection of *ayat*. To quote the Quran: *We will cause them to see Our signs on the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is The Truth.* (41:53) And, *On the*

earth are signs, for the ones that are certain and in yourselves. Will you not, then, perceive? (51:20-51:21)

God reveals the truth in a variety of ways, some explicit and others by allusion, the latter mainly through the modality of the signs, in order to provoke and engage the human intellect. The signs of God cannot be readjust off the face of the signs but require thinking and reflection. This is indicated in the phrase: *We will cause them to see Our signs* ... which suggests that the signs may not be instantaneously visible to the naked eye. The whole concept of signs seeks to forge a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* (38:29) A sign is also a portent and allusion to something other than itself and should not therefore be seen as the final message and purpose of the revelation containing it.

Approximately 750 verses, or nearly one-eighth of the Quran, exhort the readers to study nature, history, the Quran itself, and humanity at large. The text of the Quran employs a range of expressions in its appeal to those who listen (*yasma'un*), those who think (*yatafakkarun*), those who reflect (*yatadabbarun*), those who observe (*yanzurun*), those who exercise their intellect (*ya'qilun*), those who take heed and remember (*yatadhakkarun*), those who ask questions (*yas'alun*), those who develop an insight (*yatafaqqahun*), and those who know (*ya'lamun*).[2]

These and their derivatives (mostly occurring in the active verbal form) consist essentially of open invocations and encouragement to thinking that is not limited by a methodology or framework. *Meditate they not, then, on the Quran* (*afala yatadabbarun al-Qur'an*) (47:24) *Tadabbur* means concentrated and goal-oriented thinking provoked by the challenge to find something new or to solve a difficult problem.

Quranic references to thinking and the exercise of intellect occur in conjunction with basically five major themes: Belief in the Oneness and generosity of God (*tawhid*); reflection on the Quran; the human being and the universe; historical precedent; and thinking itself.

References to *aql* (intellect) and its derivatives occur on 49 occasions in the text. The typical Quranic expression, *ulu'l-albab* (those who possess vision and understanding), and its synonym, *ulu'l-nuha* (people endowed with intellectual abilities) occur 33 times in the text. Such expressions are frequently juxtaposed with the exposition of signs, such as in the sign: *Thus, God makes manifest His signs to you so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (2:242) or in the sign: *Surely, We made manifest the signs to you so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (57:17). Repeated references to pondering over the signs are variously nuanced such that they embrace within their fold the widest spectrum of people who may be endowed with different intellectual abilities and endowments.[3]

Al-Isfahani defines thought (*al-fikr*) as the power of the mind that facilitates access to knowledge (*'ilm*). Thinking (*al-tafakkur*) is the movement of that

power which is driven by the intellect (*al-'aql*), and this can only occur when an initial image of the subject is attainable in the mind of the thinker. Thinking cannot, therefore, proceed over something of which no image exists in the mind. This can be said of the self of God, for example, as we have no image on which to focus our thought.[4]

The human being can only think over the attributes of God through the observation of His signs. Broadly speaking, thinking proceeds over the whole of the created universe without any exception; indeed, the Quran repeatedly invites such in respect to both the physical and abstract aspects of reality, both in the present and in regards to bygone history that is only perceived by the intellect rather than sense perception. Often the Quran gives examples, parables, and narratives of other nations, and then follows them with the reminder, usually addressed to the Prophet, to recount the narratives of the past so that the people may think and reflect over them:

And recount to them the tiding of him to whom We gave Our signs. (7:175)

And there are the parables that We propound for humanity so that perhaps they will reflect. (59:21)

Truly, in that are certainly signs for a folk who reflect. (30:21)

A hierarchy of five perceptive-cognitive functions is also suggested, including and extending through hearing, sight, thinking, dhikr remembrance, and certainty.[5]

Given such a scale of intensified perceptive understanding, the Quran propounds the notion of *ulul'l-albab*, the thoughtful individuals who are possessed of proper understanding and response. *'Aql* is thus tied to the cognitive dimension of faith.

Significantly, the very term for reason and intelligence in Arabic, *al-'aql*, has at the core of its basic meaning the practical idea of "restraining" and "binding," that is, of holding one's self back from blameworthy conduct—being an interior self-imposed limit. Quranic commentators understand thinking (*tafakkur, tafkir*) as pondering and reflection, which is a mental activity and process, not an outcome.

Thinking (*tafakkur*) is considered as a form of worship of God if it is done with sincerity and good purpose. *'Aql* in its Quranic conception is also one that conceives the truth, and it is always in search of it. This conception of *'aql* precludes one that is rigid, arrogant, and misleading. Some have also drawn the conclusion from the ubiquitous Quranic emphasis on thinking that all Muslims must strive to be thinking individuals.[6]

Al-Qaradawi has quoted Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's (d. 751/1350) own observation as well as some epithetic statements, the latter narrated from other leading figures to the effect that "thinking for an hour is better than worship of many years," and another statement that "thinking for an hour is superior to a whole night of prayer." To this Ibn Qayyim added that "thinking is the act of the heart whereas worship is the act of one's limbs, and the former is superior to the latter."

The pious caliph Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz (d. 101/718) is similarly quoted: Thinking over the bounties of God is the best form of worship. Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad went so far as to say that: Thinking—*al-tafkir*—is an Islamic obligation. Just as God Most High ordered us to worship Him by performing prayer and fasting, He also ordered us to think in numerous verses and in so many different ways, all of which vindicate thinking as one of the cardinal messages of the Quran.[7]

The Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge espoused with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression *al-tafaqquh fi'l-din*, that is, understands the religion, signifying a rational and inquisitive approach to constructing a Quranic worldview.

Islam, in other words, advises analytical knowledge and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely dogmatic approach. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions: Faith based on detailed analysis (*al-iman al-tafsili*) as opposed to undigested and uncomprehended faith (*al-iman al-ijmali*). The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the religious scholars of all the leading schools of thought. Thus it is declared in a sign: *But a section of people only that they become learned in the way of life and that they warn their folk.* (9:122).

We also note the distinction between thought-based knowledge and transmitted or received knowledge reflected in the twin juristic and hadith-related expressions of knowledge based on understanding (*'ilm al-diraya*), and report-based and transmitted knowledge (*'ilm al-riwaya*). The former is based on understanding and insight (*diraya wa tafaqquh*) and takes priority over the latter. Whereas *'ilm al-riwaya* relies mainly on memory and retention, *'ilm al-diraya* is based on cognition, understanding, and analysis.

Thus, if there are hadith reports, or any factual reports for that matter, which do not stand to reason and understanding, they would be most likely discounted and abandoned, with the exception only of devotional matters (*'ibadat*) which are based on faith and submission more than on rational analysis.

Another feature of the Quranic vision of thinking is indicated in its emphasis on wisdom and good judgment (*hikmah*) which signifies the quality of thinking, its regard for values, and its outcome. Wisdom and good judgment can easily be said to be more important than technical know-how and expertise, as it can guide expert knowledge as to its proper application and the attainment of excellence.

The Quran mentions *hikmah* twenty times, and in about ten of these it is immediately preceded by the word Book or *kitab*, which is a reference to divine scripture—primarily the Quran, but also other divinely revealed scriptures. The text, thus, says with reference to Jesus: *And He teaches him the Book and wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel.* (3:48) The juxtaposition of *kitab* and *hikmah*

is often contextualized by a reference to the sending of prophets who teach the people and guide them with scripture and wisdom (e.g., *wa yu'allimuhum al-kitaba wa'l-hikmata*) as it is said of the Prophet Muhammad: *And teaches you the Book and wisdom* (2:159) and: *Teaches them the Book and wisdom* (62:2 ff); the descendants of Prophet Abraham: *We gave the people of Abraham the Book and wisdom* (4:54); and of Luqman: *We gave Luqman wisdom* (31:12). The holistic, superior, and indivisible value of *hikmah* in the Quran is underscored in one of its signs to the effect that when God bestows wisdom on someone that person is indeed granted an immense source of goodness: *And whomever is given wisdom, then, surely, was given much good and none recollects no doubt but those imbued with intuition.* (2:269).

To mention *hikmah* together with the Book evidently means that the Quran should be read with wisdom and divorcing the one from the other by taking a totally dogmatic approach to the Quran goes against the divine purpose and intention of its revelation. To read the Quran in the light of *hikmah* thus means a comprehensive reading that reaches beyond the obvious meaning of its words to encapsulate the goal and purpose of its message and then also reflection on the ways and means of how its benefits can be realized for the individual and society.[8]

The repeated juxtaposition of the "Book and *Hikmah*" in the Quran led some commentators, such as the Successor, Qatadah ibn Diama al-Sadusi (d.118 H), Ibn Wahhab, the disciple of Imam Malik (d. 179/795), and the Imam al-Shafii (d. 205/820) himself to the somewhat unusual observation that "*hikmah*" is a reference to the Sunna of the Prophet. Many have taken and followed this view; but since the text does not specify such a meaning for *hikmah*, the word should convey its natural and unqualified meaning as I have depicted in this presentation.

Good judgment, insight, balance and avoidance of extremes, the ability to distinguish between truth and falsehood, and procedural accuracy are commonly associated with *hikmah* and *hikmah* as such becomes a dimension of evaluative thinking in. its Quranic idiom. Besides, when the Quran declares that God Most High endowed the Prophets David and Solomon and also the renowned sage Luqman with *hikmah*, it could not have referred to the Sunna of the Prophet Muhammad, as Sunna as such did not exist in those times.

The Quranic usage of *hikmah* reinforces the holistic quality of thinking. *Hikmah* also seeks to forge a close tie between reason and emotion (*'aql wa galb*) thereby encouraging what is now known as emotional intelligence. This is how the Quran and also the Sunna often deliver their messages, for, unlike the modern statutory laws and texts, the Quranic guidance, commands, and prohibitions are often espoused with appeals to the heart and mind of their readers.[9]

Al-Isfahani defined *hikmah* as the realization of the truth through knowledge and intellect and it is manifested in the performance of benevolent deeds.[10] According to another definition: Wisdom signifies comprehension of the truth

and reality and the ability to avoid corruption in one's quest to attain perfection."[11]

Random House Dictionary of the English Language similarly defines wisdom as: Knowledge of what is true or right coupled with just judgment as to action. Wisdom is thinking informed by the light of the heart that often leads to action and contemplates its consequences in relationship with other relevant factors. This may strike a note with the renowned hadith in which it is declared that: Fearing God is the pinnacle of wisdom (*ra's al-hikmati makhafat Allah*)."[12]

It is presumably for this reason that the great religions of the world have urged the seekers of knowledge to combine it with wisdom. It is wisdom that confers a higher quality on thinking and helps knowledge to be used for the promotion of good giving it meaning and direction.

In an effort to train the individual to enhance his or her quality of thinking, al-Ghazali (d. 505/1111) discusses the two sources of knowledge that Muslim tradition has recognized. One of these is through human teaching and learning (*al-ta'allum al-insani*) and the other through divine teaching (*al-ta'lim al-rabbani*).

The former is externally transmitted from teacher to student, whereas the latter is conveyed by the Universal Intellect which is superior, more intense, and more effective than human teaching. This knowledge is internally acquired either through revelation (*wahy*), which is a prerogative of the Prophets, or it is acquired through meditation, thinking, and reflection.

Al-Ghazali subscribes to the view that the essence of all knowledge is centered in the inner self of the human person in much the same way as growth potential that is vested in the soil and seed, and it is through teaching that the individual's potential is developed.[13] These two aspects of knowledge, that is, the external and the internal, are complementary to one another. This is because no one can possibly teach or learn from any teacher all the sciences, some of which are learned through teaching but the rest inferred by the reflective thought of the individual. It is therefore important that the avenues of learning remain open both through teaching and through inner reflection, thinking, and illumination. This is another way of saying that all knowledge is acquired and developed through the senses, inner reflection and thinking, both of which partake in natural endowment and development through external transmission and teaching.

Al-Ghazali's views on the internal and external sources of knowledge tended to correspond with those of Ibn Sina (d. 428/1037), but which differed, at least partially, from those of the second/ninth century Ikhwan al-Safa (c. 373/983). All knowledge, according to the latter, is acquired through the senses and none inheres in human nature. Knowledge that is developed through thought and reflection also originate in the senses. The same analysis is extended to the axiomatic knowledge of postulates that are derived and confirmed through the senses. In support of this theory Ikhwan al-Safa have cited the Quranic verse: *And God brought you out from the wombs of your mothers and*

you know nothing. (16:78). All knowledge is therefore acquired knowledge, a view which may strike a closer note with some of the modern theories on the subject.[14]

Muslim thought in the middle ages did not admit the ontological distinction between tangible entities that could be sensuously apprehended and entities of a spiritual or subliminal nature. This may be said to be a more sound and realistic view of reality than is allowed for by the modern positivist doctrines of science. Being is manifested at various levels and in several forms, none of which is less real than the other. Arabic thought employed the notions systematized in Stoic theory that divide being into three locations: Verbal utterance, psychic representation, and reality—without this last in any sense having exclusive title to Being.

Al-Farabi (d. 950 CE) took up this view and assimilated psychic representation to the entities of reason. Others rehearsed this division with the addition of a fourth location, that of Scripture. Reality thus had a four-fold manifestation, depending on whether the subject existed immediately in itself or whether its like was graven in the mind (*dhihn*, psyche) composed of sounds, which together indicates the psychic representation, or was manifested in characters standing for sound and speech. All four have a basic characteristic in common which is existence (*wujud, haqiqah*).[15]

The Islamic and Western perceptions of creative and evaluative thinking both recognize this to be a skill that is developed through training and controlled exercise. It is through training and thinking that we adopt new patterns of perceiving reality that we are able to see differently and creatively. It is generally acceded that creative thinking and critical thinking go hand-in-hand and complement one another. Critical thinking means "involving or exercising skilled judgment or observation." Thinking is critical when it evaluates the reasoning behind a decision. Such evaluation must, however, be carried forth in a constructive manner.[16]

The purpose of critical thinking is to achieve understanding, evaluate viewpoints, and solve problems. In general, one's thinking is likely to become critical when concrete learning experiences precede abstract thought.[17] This strikes a parallel note, in its Islamic idiom, with thinking that is espoused with *hikmah*.

The famous yet controverted hadith: The first (being) God created is the intelligence (*awwalu ma khalaqa Allahu al-'aqla*), sparked prolonged discussions among Muslim thinkers over many centuries over the implications of this statement. Among the issues debated was the priority of reason over revelation and the respective role of each in their mutual inter-dependence.

Another issue was whether the disparity among humans in respect of reason also affected the modalities of moral obligation. Some prominent thinkers including Abu Bakr al-Razi (d. 313/925) apparently advocated the primacy of reason over the revelation. This would be properly known as "rationalism," which deems the primacy of reason over revelation. This is different from "ra-

tionality" which means treating any issue by using reason without giving reason priority.

Sources and Instruments of Knowledge

Commenting on the Quranic passage quoted earlier, Muhammad Iqbal observed that the Quran regards both self (*anfus*) and world (*afaq*) as sources of knowledge. God reveals His signs in inner as well as outer experience. The Quran thus opens fresh vistas of knowledge in the domain of our inner experience. Mystic experience and intuition, then, however unusual and abnormal, must now be regarded as perfectly natural and open to scrutiny like other aspects of human experience." But inner experience is only one source of human knowledge. The outer experience in the Quran, Iqbal continues on the same page, unfolds two other sources of knowledge—nature and history, and it is in tapping these sources of knowledge that "the spirit of Islam is seen at its best".

The Quran sees the signs of reality in the sun, the moon, the alternation of day and night, the perpetual changes of the winds, the variety of human colors and tongues, and in fact in the whole of nature as revealed to the sense-perception of man. The Muslim's duty is to reflect on these signs and not to pass by them as if he is deaf and blind *They have hearts with which they understand not. And they have eyes with which they perceive not. And they have ears with which they hear not. Those are like flocks. Nay! They are ones who go astray. Those, they are the ones who are heedless* (7:179), for he who does not see these signs in this life will remain blind to the realities of the life to come. The divine signs are observed through sense-perception using mainly the faculties of hearing, sight, and intellect: *Journey they not through the earth? Have they not hearts with which to be reasonable or ears with which to hear?* (22:46) The emphasis in this sign is on the faculty of reason and understanding, suggesting that not all of our information about nature comes directly from sensation, for if that were the case we would be no different from animals.

Frequent references to sense-perception as the principal mode of receiving the signs show the scientific/experimental import of the Quran. The Quran goes even further to suggest sense perception as the only avenue of knowledge, as the text already reviewed provides: *And God brought you out from the wombs of your mothers and you know nothing. And He assigned to you the ability to hear and sight and mind so that perhaps you will give thanks.* (16:78) Knowledge of the signs is therefore acquired through the use of these faculties. In another sign, the Quran praises those who listen to the word and follow the best of it: *Those who listen to the saying of the Quran and follow the fairer of it. Those are those whom God guided. And those, they are imbued with intuition.* (or make the best possible interpretation thereof) (39:18). This sign apparently subjects the data of sense-perception to the exercise of intellectual selection. The text also teaches that sense-perception does not perceive all reality: *So I swear an oath by what you perceive and what you perceive not.* (69:37-69:38).

Certainty (*yaqin*) may also be beyond the reach of human intellect, as the human mind may be blurred by the variables of time and space. What is deemed certain today may be uncertain tomorrow.

We also note that according to the teachings of the Quran, the universe is dynamic in its origin, finite, and capable of increase. Early Muslim thinkers do not seem to have grasped the Quranic emphasis on inductive reasoning and experimentation. It was indeed a slow realization for Muslim thinkers to note "that the spirit of the Quran was essentially anti-classical". Putting full confidence in Greek reasoning, Muslim thinkers tried to understand the Quran in the light of Greek philosophy, which in the beginning of their careers they had studied with so much enthusiasm.

The substance of Iqbal's analysis on this subject is also upheld by Malik bin Nabi (1905-1973), who understands the creative impulse of the Quran as the motivating force behind the efflorescence of science at a time when Muslim thinkers began to grasp the full impact of the Quran on experimentation and inductive reasoning.[18]

The dynamic conception of the universe in the Quran is also seen by its conception of life as an evolutionary movement in time. History thus constitutes the third source of knowledge in the Quran. It is one of the most essential teachings of the Quran, as Iqbal has further observed, that nations are collectively judged, and suffer for their misdeeds here and now. The Quran thus constantly cites historical instances, and urges upon the reader to reflect on the past and present experiences of humanity: *Customs passed away before you. So journey through the earth; then, look on how had been the Ultimate End of the ones who deny.* (3:137)

If a wound afflicts you, surely, a wound afflicted the folk similar to that. And these are the days We rotate among humanity so that God knows those who believed and takes witnesses to Himself from among you. (3:140)

And: *And of whom We created there is a community that guides with The Truth, and with it, it is just. And those who denied Our signs, We will draw them on gradually from where they will not know.* (7:181-183)

The Quran's interest in history as a source of human knowledge extends farther than mere indication of historical generalizations. "It has given us one of the most fundamental principles of historical criticism."[19] Since accuracy in recording facts is an indispensable condition of history as a science, accuracy depends ultimately on those who report them. The reporter's personal character is thus an important factor in judging his testimony. The Quran says *O those who believed! If one who disobeys drew near to you with a tiding, then, be clear so that you not light on a folk out of ignorance.* (49:6). It is the application of the principle embodied in this sign to the reporters of the Prophet's traditions out of which were gradually evolved the canons of historical criticism.

A scientific treatment of history, however, requires a wider experience, a greater maturity of practical reason, and a fuller realization of certain basic ideas

regarding the nature of life and time. These are in the main three, and taken together they constitute the foundation of Quranic teaching.

(1) The unity of human origin: The Quran states: *He creates you from one soul.* (39:6) And: *O humanity! Be Godfearing of your Lord Who created you from a single soul.* (4:1). But the perception of life as an organic unity is a slow achievement. Islam sowed the germ of this aspiration and it became a Quranic assignment of us to work towards its realization. Notwithstanding the fact that Christianity, long before Islam, brought the message of equality to humanity, the Roman Empire had no more than a general and abstract conception of human unity.

On the other hand, the growth of territorial nationalism in Europe has tended to stifle the broad human element in the art and literature of Europe. European colonialism was also inspired by a self-image of superiority. Europe assumed a superior image that non-European peoples could be freely dominated, exploited, and subjugated.[20] It was quite otherwise with Islam. The impulse of Islam was from the outset to make the idea of human unity a living factor in the Muslim experience that was to be taken towards fuller fruition.

(2) A keen sense of the reality of time, and the concept of life as a continuous movement in time: The Quranic view of the alternation of day and night as a sign of the ultimate Reality which appears in a fresh glory every moment and the tendency in Muslim metaphysics to regard time as objective—all this constituted the intellectual heritage and ideals of Islam.

(3) The merger between religious and secular values: This is a unique feature of Islamic thought which is distinguished by its attempt to bring harmony between them, probably for the first time in history. It was in the state of Madinah that we encounter a clear example where universally proclaimed moral values formed the criteria of political judgment. Political leaders and statesmen were expected to recognize not only the value of efficiency, but also of justice, human dignity, equality, and freedom. In his renowned *Philosophy of History*, Hegel (1770-1831) recognized that the unity between the secular and the spiritual took place in Islamic society and civilization long before it made any impact in the modern West: We must therefore regard (the reconciliation between the secular and spiritual) as commencing rather in the enormous contrast between the spiritual religious principles, and the barbarian Real World. For spirit as the consciousness of an inner world is, at the commencement, itself still in the abstract form. All that is secular is consequently given over to rudeness and capricious violence. The (Muslim) principle, the enlightenment of the oriental world, is the first to contravene this barbarism and caprice. We find it developing itself later and more rapidly than Christianity; for the latter needed eight centuries to grow into a political form.[21]

The modern West followed the example of the historical Islamic world in demanding that holders of political power operate under a set of moral rules. But as the modern West harmonized the secular and religious only nationally, the international realm was free to operate under the dynamics of power politics

and secular rudeness. This failure was a cause of the senseless violence that claimed over 100 million war victims in the twentieth century. Recognition of the danger of the purely secular politics led to the creation of the United Nations, yet even this effort was undermined by political realists who enjoyed a disproportionate sway among the political pundits of Europe and America.

Safi has rightly noted the irony that contemporary Muslim societies have unfortunately followed a similar course in decoupling the secular and the religious and now find themselves entangled in a crisis of legitimacy. Many Muslim regimes are driven by the logic of power and operate outside the realm of moral correctness. It is alarming to see that this decoupling has impacted the religiously inspired movements, which seem to succumb to the logic of power in their readiness to employ amoral--even immoral--strategies in their fight against political corruption and oppression.[22]

OBSTACLES TO CORRECT REASONING

The Quranic emphasis on pondering over the signs is also underscored by a set of guidelines to ensure a correct outcome of reflection and thinking over them. The text thus draws attention to a series of exclusions and factors that stand in the way of the proper functioning of intellect:

(1) Pursuit of caprice (*hawa*) which may consist of love, hatred, pomposity and prejudice that confound impartiality and sound judgment: *Had you considered he who took to himself his own desire as his god and whom God caused to go astray out of a knowledge, sealed over his having the ability to hear and his heart and laid a blindfold on his sight? Who, then, will guide him after God? Will you not, then, recollect?* (45:23)

And if you had followed their desires after what drew near you of the knowledge, there is not for you from God either a protector or a helper. (2:120)

But if they respond not to you, then, know that they only follow their own desires. (28:50)

And: *And obey not him whose heart We made neglectful of Our Remembrance and who followed his own desires and whose affair had been excess.* (18:28)

The choice is between two alternatives: caprice (*hawa*) and guidance (*huda*); the former evidently renders obscure one's attempt to attain the latter.

(2) Pursuit of conjecture in the face of certitude: And surely conjecture (*al-zann*) avails nothing against the truth (*al-Haqq*). *And most of them follow nothing but opinion. Truly, opinion avails them not against The Truth at all.* (10:36)

And follow up not of what there is not for you knowledge of it. Truly, having the ability to hear and sight and mind, each of those will have been that which is asked. (17:36) Knowledge and truth stand in contradistinction with the pursuit of conjecture. Note that the text says one should not follow conjecture until it is established and elevated to the rank of knowledge. It does not say that one should avoid conjecture altogether. In another place, conjecture occurs side by

side with *hawa* or that which they themselves desire: *They follow nothing but opinion and that for which their souls yearn.* (53:23) This is the kind of conjecture or opinion that is meant.

Knowledge is established by sense-perception that often begins with a measure of speculation and doubt but which is affirmed by the light of reason and conviction. Some commentators maintain that the main context for this guideline is religion: Thus it is said that one should not take speculative positions in matters of belief. As for scientific enquiry and pursuit of knowledge, conjecture is neither discouraged nor avoidable.[23]

The ultimate purpose of this engagement is to attain the truth. Once the truth is attained, one should then commit oneself to it and observe it: *And what else is there after The Truth but wandering astray. Where, then, turn you away?* (10:32)

Completed was the Word of your Lord in sincerity and justice. There is no one who changes His Words. (54) (6:115).

(3) Blind imitation of others: The correct exercise of reason in Islam is tied to personal conviction as opposed to indiscriminate following of others, hallowed custom, and precedent. These must be judged in the light of reason and abandoned if found deviant and misleading: The misguided will say, as the Quran provides: *Nay! We will follow whatever we discovered our fathers were following on it—even though their fathers had been not at all reasonable—nor are they truly guided.* (2:170)

And: *Enough is what we found our fathers upon. Even though their fathers had been knowing nothing nor are they truly guided?* (5:104)

This was the response that Prophet Abraham and other great prophets received from their detractors, but the text address them again and again that both you and your ancestors were clearly misguided. *Certainly, We gave Abraham his right judgment before. And We had been ones who know of him when he said to his father and his folk: What are these images to which you be ones who give yourselves up to? They said: We found our fathers as ones who are worshippers of them. He said: Certainly, you and your fathers had been in a clear wandering astray.*(21:51-21:54)

Forsake those who took to themselves their way of life as a pastime and as a diversion and whom this present life deluded. (6:70)

Is it that your formal prayer commands you that we leave what our fathers worship? (11:87)

As we shall presently elaborate, indiscriminate imitation of others is widely held to be the single most damaging cause of the decline of creative thinking among Muslims.

(4) Oppressive Dictatorship: The Quran takes to task arrogant dictators and those who support them and follow them. Hence the plea of those who say: *Our Lord! Truly, we obeyed our chiefs and our great ones. They caused us to go astray from the way* (33:66) should be of no merit. In a number of other places the text denounces the Pharaoh and Karun for their oppressive ways who

misled their people in rejecting the guidance that was conveyed to them. *Pharaoh and his Council but they followed the command of Pharaoh. And the command of Pharaoh was not well-intended.* (11:96)

DECLINE OF CRITICAL THINKING•

I shall not retrace well-documented history that Muslim thinkers were pioneers in the creation of new knowledge. It was due to the impact of the Quran that, in contrast to the Greeks who excelled in deductive method of reasoning and logic, Muslim scientists distinguished themselves in inductive and experimental approaches to scientific enquiry. The golden period of Muslim science started around 700 AD and lasted until about 1350 AD. Great thinkers such as Ibn Sina, Jabir ibn Hayyan, Abu Bakr Zakarriya al-Razi, Abu Rayhan al-Biruni, Ibn al-Nafis al-Dimashgi, al-Khawarizmi, and many others have left a rich legacy of contributions to the advancement of sciences in anatomy, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, optics, etc.[24]

After the fourteenth century creative thinking began to decline in the Islamic world due to a variety of factors, including the Mongol invasion and burning of Baghdad, the defeat of the Muslim Arabs in Spain and the continuing crusades, the collapse of the Ottoman caliphate, and the ensuing onslaught of European colonialism. The creative impulse of Islamic thought suffered setbacks as a result. Muslims were also beset with many internal problems including the alienation of philosophers, scientists, and thinkers from the theologians, sectarian controversies, and the prevalence of intellectual conservatism and imitation of past authority (*taqlid*)).

Philosophy and the sciences fell into a rapid decline while more rigid forms of instruction and narrower curricula prevailed. It was argued that orthodoxy was being threatened and that there was a need to restrain thinkers in order to defend religion. The latitude and diversity of discourse that expanded the scope of religious sciences, theology (*kalam*), commentary (*tafsir*), hadith, and jurisprudence (*fiqh*) gave way to narrower criteria of *kufr*, *bidah*, and *taqlid* and the so-called closing of the door of *ijtihad* (*sadd bab al-ijtihad*).[25]

More recently, a certain abuse of Islamic authority operated by a dogmatic radicalism has exacerbated the decline of creative thought among Muslims. The situation is not helped by the prevalence of passivity in popular culture concerning the dogmatic excesses of these ardent proponents of imitation of past authority (*taqlid*). One of the salient features of this mindset is a certain ignorance of the essential impulse of the Quran on creative thought. Malik bin Nabi put it succinctly that the crisis of a civilization and a society at a critical point of its history "is not the paucity of its material objects but the poverty of its ideas."[26]

WHAT IS *IJTIHAD*?

The Quranic appeal to rational thinking and enquiry is not restrained by

the methodology of *ijtihad*. There is, in fact, no clear text on *ijtihad*[27] in the Quran. *Ijtihad* as a concept originates in the hadith of the Prophet and the practice and precedent of companions. The methodology of *ijtihad* which is the basic theme of the science of the sources of law (i.e. *usul al-fiqh*) is itself a product of *ijtihad*. It seems that the Prophet also saw *ijtihad* as a creative impulse rather than engaging in the technicalities of legal reasoning—as the *usul al-fiqh* later developed in abundance. When the Prophet spoke of *ijtihad* or when he approved of its application, he seems to have done so in terms of *ijtihad* qua creative thinking.

One would readily admit that imposing restrictions on thinking, even if it were possible, by cultures and legal traditions could be exaggerated, in which case it would be prone to acquiring negative dimensions. One would not, on the other hand, advocate free thinking that is not limited by some kind of goal-orientation and values. Even the actual process of creative thinking, as earlier noted, is a skill that could be learned and refined by stages to direct it into productive avenues. The liberal tradition of the West tends to impose minimal restrictions on thinking whereas Islam tends to take a more guided approach to creative reasoning. Whereas both the Islamic and Western traditions recognize the authority of reason as a criterion of judgment, the liberal tradition has, unlike Islam, isolated spirituality and faith from the ambit of scientific rationality.

However, the methodology of *ijtihad* was also influenced in the course of time by a variety of factors, including the political climate, the change of caliphate (*khilafah*) to monarchy (*mulk*), Hellenistic thought in relationship to analogy (*qiyas*) and its syllogistic components, and the rift between the religious scholars and ruling authorities.[28]

Usul al-fiqh and its proposed methodology followed a difficult course and became embroiled in technicality that had adverse consequences for *ijtihad*. What is needed now is to recapture the purity of this vital concept, to make *ijtihad* as our principal instrument for originality and healthy adjustment, but also to revise and reform some aspects of the theory of *ijtihad* itself that are no longer responsive to the prevailing conditions and challenges of our time.

I have elsewhere discussed the theory of *ijtihad* and its related issues and space here does not permit engagement in detail.[29] Yet I conclude this section by suggesting, however briefly, that the conventional theory of *ijtihad* needs to be revised and reformed in respect of the need:

1) to recognize the validity of collective and consultative *ijtihad* (*ijtihad jama'i*) side by side with that of *ijtihad* by individual scholars;

2) to allow experts in other fields such as science, economics, and medicine to carry out *ijtihad* in their respective fields if they are equipped with adequate knowledge of the source evidence of Islam. They may alternatively sit together with, or seek advice from, those learned in *Shariah*.

Ijtihad has in the past been often used as an instrument of diversity and disagreement rather than of unity and consensus. Although disagreement must admittedly be allowed in principle, yet there is a greater need today for unity

and consensus. Scholars and learned bodies should not perhaps encourage excessive engagement in diversity of schools and sects but try to find ways that would help to close the gap between them and encourage unity on principles. This may require policy guidelines for different settings and countries, and, if so, that should be reflected in our approaches to *ijtihad*. Certain guidelines may also be provided by thinkers and leaders to stimulate consensus-oriented *ijtihad* within the ranks of the judiciary and legislative assemblies.

Ijtihad has in the past been conceived basically as a legal concept and methodology. Our understanding of the source evidence on *ijtihad* does not specify such a framework for *ijtihad*. Rather, we think of the original conception of *ijtihad* as a problem-solving formula for the problems encountered by individual Muslims and the Muslim community. This would confirm our view of the need to broaden the scope of *ijtihad* to other disciplines beyond the framework of *fiqh* and *usul al-fiqh*.

According to a legal maxim of Islamic jurisprudence, there should be no *ijtihad* in the presence of a clear text of the Quran and Hadith (*la ijtihad ma'al-nass*). This maxim should also be revised. This is because of the possibility that the text in question could now be seen in a different light and given a fresh interpretation in a different context. What we are saying is that the legal text may need to be understood first and that by itself may involve *ijtihad*. Hence *ijtihad* may not be precluded if it could advance a fresh understanding of the text in the first place.

The persistent decline of critical reason among Muslims is due partly to the notion that the exercise of personal judgment and *ijtihad* ceased with the epoch-making works of the legists and imams of the past. Added to this is the prevailing mindset that a Muslim should follow one or the other of the established schools of thought and abandon his judgment in favor of interpretations of the earlier centuries whose originators could have no conception of the necessities of the twenty-first century Muslims. Until about 1500 CE, independent *ijtihad* allowed Muslims and Muslim societies to continually adapt in the face of changing societal conditions and new advances in knowledge.

Unfortunately, as Muslim civilization began to weaken about four centuries ago in the face of Western advances, Muslims began to adopt a more conservative stance in an attempt to preserve traditional values and institutions. As a result Muslim thinkers became inclined to view innovation and adaptation negatively. For all the rhetoric and symbolic form of the neo-radicals that tend to dominate the audience of Muslims, the spirit of Islam is often palpably missing from their endeavors, while more than ever *ijtihad* is needed where women, education, and politics are concerned.

ISLAM AND THE WEST

Scientific rationality essentially reduces intelligence to the level of neural chemistry where mental and behavioral phenomena are understood merely as manifestations of physical processes. It tends to deprive us of our noblest di-

mensions (faith, love, beauty), separates the soul from the body, and the sensory from the intelligible. In the realm of economics, we are merely a producer and consumer of goods and is moved solely by our individual self-interest. This too is opposed to the Islamic viewpoint which also sees in us morality and transcendent faith.

This physicalist analysis of intelligence is now increasingly being seen as conceptually inadequate. The real question is whether one may admit a human dimension which is autonomous and irreducible to a physical mass. In Moravia's phrase "can one posit something which exists and yet at the same time is non physical? Do the rejection of the soul and the achievements attained by bio and neurosciences oblige us to hold that man is nothing but body?"[30] Recently these have been attempted by some creative thinkers to reconceptualize intentions of 'reason' and 'intelligence' along anti-materialistic lines drawing on the experience of older non-Western traditions, or even popular folk conceptions.[31]

Islamic philosophy—which mainly studies purposes, as against science which mainly studies causes—sees, in line with the Quranic teaching, the role of objects and events as signs of divine presence and action. Faith is understood by Muslims not as a limitation on science but as its vista for enrichment and perfection.[32]

The variant perspectives of Western philosophy and science are also behind the Western puzzlement why Muslims have not become more secularized. This unwarranted assumption has in the past led to mistaken assessments of Islam and continues to foster genuine misunderstanding concerning the real nature of Islamic religion and intellectual traditions. The misunderstanding is unfortunately not unique to Westerners. For the majority of Muslims today are also woefully uninformed of the depth and scope of their rich heritage on the authoritative validity of reason. Thinking Muslims should work to vindicate the symbiotic relation of faith and reason in their religion and see it as a source of enrichment and contribution of Islam to human understanding and civilization.

CONCLUSION

This essay advanced a Quranic perspective on thinking, which is affirmative in critical and goal-oriented thinking and also provides a set of guidelines that ensures its purity and purpose from negative reductionist influences. The guidelines so provided are also rich in advancing a spiritual dimension with the understanding that thinking which is not informed by morality and faith can lose its direction and purpose and can even become harmful to human welfare. From the Quranic vantage point, the sciences of nature should be key to our cognition of the signs of God in the universe. For this may be instrumental in solving individual and social problems without interrupting the cosmic order and the human habitat on earth. The blatant disregard of ethical values in science has weakened scientists' sense of responsibility and contributed to the degradation of the human condition on the globe.

Since thinking is a skill that can be advanced by self-application and train-

ing, it is amenable to guidance, bereavement, and enrichment. Universities and institutions of learning in Muslim countries are generally short of resources, and those who have the means still fall short, to their detriment, of nurturing the culture of reading and research among their students and scholars. Centers of higher learning may do well to establish a new order of relationship between the natural sciences and humanities, and between all fields of knowledge and human welfare and also the avenues of benefit to society. The present-day education system is due for a reappraisal in order to instill creative thinking and breadth of vision among students and scholars that is informed by the inter-relatedness of the various disciplines of learning. This could be done, as one observer suggested, "by adding sufficient number of courses in humanities to the science and engineering curricula, by cross-disciplinary interaction and collaboration."[33] The main characteristic of the human sciences, from the Islamic perspective, is that they are not value-free and have to be incorporated within the value system of Islam that is informed by the ethical and human dimension of values.

It is ironic to note, however, that the vast majority of Muslims are wont to rote reading of the Quran which is patently vacuous and devoid of thinking. The Quran is usually read, committed to memory, and cited for its spiritual merit rather than intellectual stimulation and enrichment. This is evidently not the advice one obtains from the Quran itself Al-Qaradawi has rightly observed about the current realities of public education in Muslim countries that "the system relies on memorization and cramming more than it does on comprehension and analysis. A typical weakness of this method is that the memorizer forgets as soon as the exams are over. But if what is learned is founded in understanding and comprehension, its substance will remain in the mind and will not be prone to oblivion so quickly."[34]

But the issue that we raise here is well-entrenched and originates in the overall emphasis that most educationists and jurists of earlier times have placed on the study of the Quran, Hadith and *fiqh* manuals, often calling attention to words and sentences of the text at the expense of comprehension and analysis. The basic approach to Quran studies thus emphasized correct pronunciation and memorization. This repetitive system of learning was particularly pronounced in the context of child education, although it was not confined to this framework as other and more advanced levels of Islamic scholarship also bore the same influence.[35]

Notwithstanding the profound influence of the Quran on the thoughts, mores, and cultures of Muslim individuals and societies, thinking by its nature does not lend itself to any predetermined framework and guideline. It seems that the Quran also seeks only to provide signs and signposts on thinking, but the subjective and innately individual bent of thinking is often inspired by imagination and insight which cannot be encapsulated by definitions and guidelines. A creative mind is unique by its attributes, and thinking that originates in a learned and upright individual is one of the greatest gifts of creation that can it-

self fit the description of divine example, or sign, of God on earth.

It remains to be added though that imaginative thinking has also been sparkled by sources and influences among great Muslim thinkers of other cultures and traditions—just as we note also that the great thinkers of history emerged in all regions, cultures, and religions. The substance of these statements is upheld in a renowned Hadith in which the Prophet instructed the Muslims to "seek knowledge, even unto China," and in another Hadith that "wisdom is the lost property of the believer; he is entitled to it wherever he finds it."

Knowledge and wisdom must therefore be ultimately seen as the shared achievements of humanity, endowed and posited by its outstanding and creative thinkers. This is also known from the fact that the outcomes of creative thinking are often shared and experienced far beyond geographical locales and frontiers—more so perhaps in the age of globalization.

It is hoped that the great thinkers and leaders of humanity make it a part of their agenda and commitment to narrow down the distances and divides between the intellectual and cultural traditions of the world and aspire them to the veritable vision of a shared destiny and wider human fraternity in their deliberations.

Mohammad Hashim Kamali[36]

PREVIEW

The text of *Book Year 1* begins with the first revelations. The first person to accept the prophethood of Muhammad was his wife, Khadija, followed by his family that included his daughters, as well as Ali ibn Abi Talib, Zayd ibn Haritha, later to be the adopted son of the Messenger, and Barakat whom the Messenger had freed at the time of his marriage to Khadija.

The chronological order of the chapters of the Quran that follow throughout the series is based on the list accepted by al-Azhar University in Cairo and is considered to be the official order. It differs greatly from the chronological order developed by Western scholars over the centuries and is much more detailed.

While the text of this book is referred to as *The Year 1 of the Revelation 13 BH/610 CE*, its history relates to the last four months of the Arabic calendar. The revelation begins sometime in the last ten odd nights of Ramadan (August 17, 19, 21, 23 or 25, 610 CE). It is not clear when the next revelation came, but according to some authorities, there was a three week lapse. If this was the case, the revelation, then, most probably continued through the Arabic months of Shawwal, Dhu al-Qada and Dhu al-Hijja. The first of Muharram is the new year, 12 BH/610-611 CE.

The revelation begins with 96:1-96:5 and continues with signs 68:1-68:6, 73:1-73:4 and then 74:1-74:9. The fifth revealed is the Opening Chapter (1:1-1:7). It was revealed either before or after the angel Gabriel instructs the Prophet on how to perform the formal prayer (*salat*). The 6th Chapter listed is that of Chapter 111: The Rope of Palm Fibers in regard to Abu Lahab. He and his wife, Umm Jamil, the sister of Abu Sufyan, continuously opposed the prophetic mission of Prophet Muhammad.

While only a few signs of the first four chapters revealed were revealed at the beginning of the revelation and the remainder at a later time, other than 73:20 that has been recorded to have been revealed one year later, the dates of the others are not clear. Therefore, they have been added as appendices to *Book Year 1*.

PRELUDE

THE BEGINNING OF THE REVELATION

It is the month of Ramadan 13 BH (that is, 13 years before the migration, *hegira*) /610 CE, on one of the last odd nights of the month (August 17, 19, 21, 23, 25, or 27), Muhammad ibn Abd Allah once again goes to a cave inside the lofty, conical shaped mount known as Hira as has been his custom during the months of Rajab and Ramadan for the past few years. Mount Hira is about two miles north of Makkah. Its cave is four yards long and one to three yards wide.

The one whom the Quraysh call "the Trustworthy" seeks out the solitude of the cave in order to separate himself from the tumult of daily life and the chaos of the city, to reflect, mediate, worship and adore his Lord, for he is one of those worshipers of the One God who are called *hanif*. He would stay as long as his provisions lasted and then return home, either stay there for a time or return again to the cave.

Everything around the cave was rugged, bleak.[1]

It is CE 610. Muhammad is forty years old.

The Arabian peninsula is immersed in idol worship, having deviated far from the message of the Prophets of previous time and, in particular, from the message of Abraham.

Muhammad's wife, Khadija, vividly remembered that during that time when he has sensed he is surrounded by the darkness of oppression, he has retreated to a cave on Mount Hira outside Makkah. Perhaps in prayer, perhaps in meditation, he has told her, a dawn would appear which would bear witness to a new order. He has sensed the silence before the storm. Perhaps history is planning to rebel against this status quo, against the oppressed—both the One God and His Abrahamic people.

As Khadija awaits his return this day, he sits in the cave, lost in meditation deep and mystical. He looks at the mountain cave and the silent valley below, during the day—the pure skies of Arabia, and, at night—the abundance of stars.

That night the sounds of his footsteps, which are heard in the silence of the mountains, are suddenly still. He has returned to the cave and sits as if in anticipation of something unknown which he senses within himself. In anguish for that which he senses, but cannot see or even express, he falls asleep.

> He is to later recall: I had fallen asleep in the Hira cave when [the angel] Gabriel appeared to me.... and he said: Recite (*iqra*).
>
> I said: What should I recite.
>
> Gabriel applied pressure to me and then released me and said: Recite. This was repeated three times.
>
> I asked: 'What should I recite? and these signs were revealed.
>
> Deeply stirred, he rushed home to his beloved wife, Khadija. She accepted him and what he said with certainty of belief. She knew he spoke the truth. She was the first convert to belief in the Quranic revelation.

Khadija felt awed by the experience of which she sensed she was a part. She so loved Muhammad that she deeply felt whatever happened to him. She felt honored to have been his wife when he first received the revelation. She respected his message and his mission. She offered him everything she had upon the Way of God, asking for nothing in return.

Those who do not understand Khadija's inner joy only see her bearing sorrow, poverty, and insults. They cannot comprehend the inward strength that grows strong and firm because she placed her whole being upon His Way; dedicated her every asset for His cause. How blessed is this beloved Companion of God's Prophet to have been present at a moment of uncertainty in the life of Mustafa (the Chosen One) and to have had the discernment (*furqan*) to know it is the truth. Praise belongs to God (*al-hamd Allah*).

Upon hearing the news of the revelation to her beloved Muhammad, Khadija went to the home of her cousin, Waraqa ibn Nawfal. He was a Christian, a man learned in both the Torah and the Gospel, who had become blind with age. When she told him of what has happened, Waraqa cried out: Holy! Holy! Verily in whose hand is Waraqa's soul, if you speak the truth to me, Khadija, there has come unto him the greatest of angels, Gabriel, who had come to Moses beforehand. Lo! He is the Prophet of this people. Bid him be of good heart. Khadija returned to Muhammad and told him what her cousin had said.

Soon after that Muhammad went again to the cave for a retreat and afterwards he circumambulated the Kabah. While he was doing this, he met Waraqa who asked him: Tell me what you have seen and heard? The Prophet told him and Waraqa said: Surely by Him in whose hand is Waraqa's soul, you are the Prophet of these people. The greatest of the angels, Gabriel, has come to you as he came to Moses. You will be called a liar and you will be despised. They will cast you out and fight against you. Truly, if I live to see that day, God knows I will help His Cause. Then he leaned forward and kissed the Messenger's forehead.

The words of comfort and reassurance from his beloved Khadija and her cousin, Waraqa, were followed by a second revelation to the Prophet. It was not recorded exactly how this revelation came, but the Messenger mentioned generally two ways by which he received revelation: Sometimes it comes to me like the reverberations of a bell and that is the hardest upon me. The reverberations stop when I am aware of their message. And sometimes the angel takes the form of a human being and speaks to me and I am aware of what he says.[2]

THE EARLIEST CONVERTS

Following Khadija, their daughters, Zaynab (597 CE), now 13

years old, Ruqayya (ca. 598 CE), 12 years old, and Umm Kulthum (ca. 599 CE), now 11 years old, accepted the Quranic message when their mother, Khadija, did. The fourth daughter, Fatima bint Muhammad, was born some say five years before the Messenger began his mission (605 CE) and some say five years after the mission began (615 CE). For those who say she was born five years before the revelation, they say that she accepted the Quranic message at the same time as her mother and sisters.

Ali ibn Abu Talib (599-661 CE) had moved into the home of Muhammad and Khadija when he was six years old (605 CE) where he grew up. Shortly after the rebuilding of the Kabah, Muhammad became the guardian of Ali, his first cousin, the child of his uncle, Abu Talib. It fell out thus: a season of severe scarcity visited Makkah and Abu Talib, still poor, was having difficulty supporting his family. His difficulties were perceived by Muhammad, who, prompted by his usual kindness and consideration, went to his rich uncle Abbas, and said: O Abbas! Your brother, Abu Talib, has a burdensome family, and you see what straits men are brought to. Let us go to him and relieve him somewhat of the care of his children. I will take one son, if you will take another and we shall support them. Abbas consenting, they proposed this idea to Abu Talib. He replied: Leave me Akil and Talib and do you with the others as it pleases you. So Muhammad took Ali, and Abbas took Jafar.

Zayd ibn Haritha had been sold into slavery at an early age. He was bought by a nephew of Khadija. She gave him to Muhammad in 595 CE at the time of their marriage before the revelation began. Part of the family at the time the revelation began, Zayd accepted the prophethood of Muhammad.

Then there is Barakat (Umm Ayman), born of Abyssinian parents. Barakat was to become one of the women who raised God's Messenger. She accepted the Quranic message when the other members of his family did. He often referred to her (Barakat) as his mother (*ummi*) in later days.

THE PAUSE IN THE REVELATION

Ibn Saad reports on the authority of Ibn Abbas that the revelation paused for a few days.[3] The angel does not return. Each and every moment weighs heavily upon Muhammad's heart. It is the curtailment of the revelation that causes him so much anguish. Has Gabriel forgotten him?[4]

Yahya ibn Abbad ibn Abd Allah ibn al-Zubayr from his father Abbad from Ayisha who said that only a little time elapsed between the coming down of 73:1 and 73:11-14.[5]

These signs: (73:1-73:4) are an awesome command requiring the

Prophet to pull himself out from the warmth of his bed in a comfortable home and with a happy family life so as to place himself in the midst of a hard struggle, with different forces pulling him here and there.

When his wife, Khadija, once told him to go to bed and relax, he said to her: The time for sleep has passed.

Yes, indeed. He had nothing more than long nights and a long struggle ahead of him.

It is recorded in regard to Khadija:

And on occasion, visible to the Messenger alone, as is normally the case, the angels say to him: Give unto Khadija greetings of peace from her Lord.

He says to Khadija: O Khadija, here is Gabriel who greets you with peace from thy Lord.

And when Khadija could find words to speak, she says: God is peace and from Him is peace and on Gabriel be peace.[6]

WRAPPED IN A CLOAK

Another night when he was lying wrapped in his cloak, there broke in upon his seclusion a divine command more stern and urgent than any he had received.[7]

Muhammad says: While I was walking I heard a voice from the sky. I looked up and surely enough it was the same angel who had visited me in the cave of Hira. I was afraid of him and knelt on the ground. I went home saying: Cover me, cover me.

LESSON 1. CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY EMBODYING A POINT OF VIEW, FRAME OF REFERENCE, PERSPECTIVE

The point of view or frame of reference for this course on Quranic Studies is that of the Quran. All the words in the Quran are the Words of God as revealed to Prophet Muhammad. The Prophet related whatever was revealed to him through the Angel Gabriel (*ruh al-qudus*) with God's permission.

This leads into a second aspect of the Quranic point of view. It is through the prophetic mission to give guidance to humanity to bring people from the darkness of ignorance into the light of knowledge and wisdom.

Point of view is an integral tool of description in the Quran to show emotions or feelings about an experience or situation. It lets the student hear and see what takes place.

Questions of **point of view** force students to examine the Quranic **perspective** and to consider their own point of view as well. How does the Quran define its point of view? In this Quranic Studies Course when the subject is the first person singular (I) or the first person plural (we), most often they refer to God. For the second person singular (thou) as subject, it most often refers to the Prophet when in lower case English and upper case refers to God. In either case, this pronoun appears as **you** or **You** in bold font. The second person plural (you) as subject most often refers to a community of people. The third person singular (he, she, it), when he, most often refers to God and it is capitalized. The third person plural (they) as subject most often refers to a community of people. When the object of a sentence is the first person (me), this most often refers to God; second person (thee or Thee), when lower case refers to the Prophet; uppercase, to God. Third person singular (him, her, it or Him), when Him is capitalized, it refers to God, lower case "him" most often refers to the Prophet. Third person plural (them) most often refers to a community of people.

Arabic also has a dual pronoun as both subject or object, masculine or feminine, referring to two people and possessive pronouns (mine, thy, his, her, it, our, your or their). When thy is used in the Arabic of the Quran, the English is **your.**

In the first revelation (96:1-96:5), the point of view moves from a command to the second person singular (the Prophet) to God as third person singular, back to the Prophet and then back to God.

QURANIC CHAPTER 96: THE BLOOD CLOT (AL-ALAQ)

SIGNS 96:1-96:5

Makkah: *Recite in the Name of **your** Lord Who created.* (96:1)
He created the human being from a clot. (96:2)
*Recite and **your** Lord is The Most Generous,* (96:3)
Who taught by the pen, (96:4)
taught the human being what he knows not. (96:5)

COMMENTARY°

The beginning of revelation: *Recite in the Name of your Lord Who created. He created the human being from a clot. Recite: Your Lord is the Most Generous, He Who taught by the pen. He taught the human being what he knows not.* (96:1-96:5) is a unique event at a unique moment. It marks the end of one era and the beginning of another in the history of humanity, not just in the history of a certain nation or a particular generation.

Here, also, emerges the fact of human beings being taught by the Creator. The pen has always been the most widespread means of learning and it has always had the most far-reaching impact on human life. This fact is not as clear at the time of revelation as it is now. But God knows the value of the pen. Therefore, this reference to the pen at the beginning of this, His final message to humanity, is the first revelation of the Quran. Yet God's Messenger charged with the delivery of this message cannot read or write. Had the Quran been his own composition, he would not have stressed this fact at the first moment. But the Quran is a message God has revealed. The signs then state the source of learning, which is God. From Him we receive all our knowledge, past, present and future. From Him we learn any secret revealed to him about this universe, life and himself.

These few signs revealed at the very first moment of the Quranic message state the comprehensive basis of faith and its concepts. Everything starts, works and moves in His name. He is the One who creates, originates and teaches. Whatever the human being learns and whatever experience and knowledge he acquires come originally from God. God has taught us what we know not. The Prophet recognizes this basic Quranic fact. It governs his feelings, teachings and practices for the rest of his life because it is the principal fact of the Quranic message.

SUMMARY OF QURANIC SIGNS 96:1-96:5

WHO IS GOD, THE LORD?

Who is this Lord? The One who created, created the human being from a clot. God is The Most Generous. It is God who taught by the Pen, taught us what we human beings do not know.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

From these five short signs that begin the Quranic revelation, the Prophet hears the recitation that he has been commanded to recite three times in the Name of his Lord and that his Lord is The Most Generous. The word "recite" (often mistranslated in English as 'read') that appears in 96:1 and 96:3 are the first of the commands (imperative form of a verb) to the Prophet that are to continue throughout the revelation and to later serve as the basis for the development of the Shariah. Some commands are to the Prophet, as these are because

they are directed to the second person singular (thou, **you**). Later there will be commands to second person plural (you) being directed to a community of people.

QUESTIONS FOR CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

WHENEVER WE THINK, WE THINK WITHIN A POINT OF VIEW:

What is the Quranic point of view in these signs?
We see things from a position, from a sense of place, frame of reference.
What is it to look at things from the Quranic point of view?
The signs seem to be approaching the command to recite from what point of view?

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

How am I looking at these signs?
Is there another way to look at them that I should consider?
What exactly am I focused on?
How am I seeing it?
Is my view the only reasonable view?
What does my point of view ignore?
Have I ever considered the way others view this?
Given the situation, which of these possible viewpoints makes the most sense?
Am I having difficulty looking at this situation from a viewpoint with which I disagree?
What is the point of view of the Quranic message here?
Did I study viewpoints that challenge my personal beliefs?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I am able to look at the Quran from the Quranic and non-Quranic point of view.
I am able to focus on the Quranic signs of the first revelation and how it might have felt to the Prophet when he received it.
I am able to look at this from a viewpoint with which I disagree and in doing so am able to challenge my personal beliefs.

LESSON 2. CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
GENERATING PURPOSE, AIM, GOAL, OBJECTIVE

Questions of **purpose** force you to define tasks. One of the goals of the Quran is to break the bonds of ignorance, missed guidance, social and moral corruption. These are all considered to be shadows or darkness. When these bonds are broken, the Quran guides humanity to goodness, light and being fair and just. You begin developing your reasoning or discernment faculty by first understanding what this particular element of thought or reasoning is. That is, you learn to generate the purpose, aim, goal or objective of the Quranic signs and their message.

QURANIC CHAPTER 68: THE PEN (AL-QALAM)
SIGNS 68:1-68:4

Makkah: *Nun. By the pen and that which they write.*(68:1)
You are not, by the divine blessing of your Lord,
one who is possessed. (68:2)
And, truly, there is for you certainly, compensation,
that which is unfailing. (68:3)
And, truly, you are of sublime morals. (68:4)

When the second revelation comes, it begins with a single letter, *nun*. It is followed by one of the many oaths or things that God swears by in this and later signs. Here, it is the pen which has already been mentioned in the first revelation as the primary means by which God teaches human beings His wisdom. When asked about the pen, the Prophet says: The first thing God created is the pen. He creates the tablet and says to the pen: Write, and the pen answers: What shall I write? God said: Write My knowledge of My creation until the Day of Resurrection. Then the pen traces what had been commanded.

COMMENTARY°

The signs begin with an oath by God Almighty. *Nun. By the pen and that which they write.* (68:1) The oath is by the letter *nun*, the pen and writing. This point is endorsed by the fact that Quranic revelations began with the command to recite. (96:1) This instruction was given to the unlettered Prophet, whom God in His infinite wisdom willed to be unable to read and write. Yet the revelations vouchsafed to him began with such emphasis on learning through reciting and writing with the pen. This importance is reiterated here by the oath using the letter *nun*, the pen and the writing. All this should be seen as part of the divine system of cultivating the Muslim community and preparing it for the universal role God assigned to it.

We also note here that the moral element is given considerable weight in God's measure. ***You are not, by the divine blessing of your***

Lord one who is possessed. And, truly, there is for you certainly, compensation, that which is unfailing. And, truly, you are of sublime morals. (68:2-68:4) It is a fundamental element in the Quranic message, just as it is fundamental in the Prophet's own character.

The Prophet says: I have been given the message that perfects noble morality. He thus sums up the objective of his message. His teachings are highly consistent in emphasizing the importance of morality and good manners. His own behavior provides a shining picture as well as a practical noble example that merits a record in Gods eternal book: *And, truly, you are of sublime morals.* (68:4)

Morality, in its perfection, beauty, balance, consistency, straightforwardness and unity, is reflected in the person of Muhammad as he deservedly earns the praise granted by none other than God Almighty: *And, truly, you are of sublime morals.* (68:4)

SUMMARY OF QURANIC SIGNS 68:1-68:4

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

Word must have spread among the Quraysh clans of Makkah that Muhammad claims to have received a revelation from the unseen world. There would have been those among them whose first reaction is: Muhammad is possessed. He is told that not only is he not possessed, but that he will receive a compensation and that he is of sublime morals, of a great moral character, having moral excellence.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

Again, among the first revelations, mention of the pen and what those of us who write use in order to write. The pen becomes an important element in our thoughts as it has been repeated to us. If the Makkans who said that Muhammad is possessed would have listened carefully to the recitation, they would have known that the Quranic message confirms that he is of great moral character.

QUESTIONS FOR CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

THINK ABOUT PURPOSE

What is the Quranic purpose in revealing these signs?
What is our purpose in doing what we are doing?
What is the purpose of the assignment to rewrite the signs as I understand them?
What is the purpose of the pen in this story?

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

What is my teacher trying to accomplish?
What is my friend's purpose?

What is my purpose?
What is the purpose of these signs?
Should we change our purpose?
Is my purpose fair to everyone?

Student Assessment

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I understood the purpose of the pen in the revelation of these signs.
I understood the goal of learning according to this Quranic sign.
I understood the purpose of the signs saying that the Prophet was not possessed as his enemies said, but a person of sublime morals, someone to be followed because of his moral character.

LESSON 3. CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
CLARIFYING AND ANALYZING THE MEANINGS OF WORDS OR PHRASES

Critical thinkers of Quranic studies have clear thoughts about the Quranic signs. They perceive the concepts and recognize what kind of evidence is needed to analyze the meaning of Quranic words. They know that just giving a definition is not sufficient. They must also be able to give examples of the Quranic concept. On the other hand, uncritical thinkers see words drifting through their minds. They are not able to give examples of the concepts of the words or to critique their use of the concept.

QURANIC CHAPTER 73: THE ONE WHO IS WRAPPED (AL-MUZZAMMIL)
SIGNS 73:1-73:9

Makkah: *O you, the one who is wrapped,* (73:1)
stand up during the night, but for a little part, (73:2)
for half of it or reduce it a little. (73:3)
Or increase it and chant the Quran, a good chanting, (73:4)
for We will cast on you a weighty saying. (73:5)
Truly, one who begins in the night, is when impression is strongest
and speech more upright. (73:6)
Truly, for you in the daytime is a lengthy occupation. (73:7)
And remember you the Name of your Lord.
And devote yourself to Him with total devotion. (73:8)
The Lord of the East and of the West, there is no god but He.
So take Him to yourself as your Trustee. (73:9)

COMMENTARY°

This seclusion is an aspect of how God guides the Prophet, indeed, prepares him, for the great task that is later to be assigned him. It will be a continuous and hard struggle, one that requires patience, perseverance, night worship, recitation of the Quran and the permanent pursuit of God's pleasure. It is a full implementation of divine commands. (73:1-73:9)

RHYTHM OF THE SIGNS

The first half of the chapter maintains the same rhythm, and almost the same rhyme, with an *l* followed by a long *a*, throughout. It gives the chapter a relaxed but courtly beat, one that suits its majestic command, the seriousness of the duty and the successive and momentous images the entire chapter portrays. These include the weighty message.

TIME FOR COMFORT IS OVER

O you, the one who is wrapped: This is a call from on high, given by God Almighty. Stand up, for you have a great mission and a heavy burden. Stand up, for you need to put in sustained efforts. Stand up, for the time of sleep and comfort is over. You need to prepare for the task ahead of you.

Such is the preparation for the great task: ... *stand up during the night, but for a little part, for half of it or reduce it a little. Or increase it and chant the Quran, a good chanting,* (73:1-73:4) The signs refer to the methods that attain success in preparation for the great task: Night worship, the remembrance of God and chanting the Quran.

A HEAVY WEIGHT TO CARRY

All these preparations were made so that the Prophet could receive the weighty discourse: *We will cast on you a weighty saying.* (73:5) This is a reference to the Quran and the assignment it gives the Prophet. The Quran is not weighty in its phraseology. On the contrary, it is both easy to bear in mind and recite. However, it is weighty in the scales of truth, and profound in its effect on peoples' hearts.

Standing up in night worship when others are asleep, leaving aside the distractions of daily life, being in contact with God, receiving His light and bounty, seeking the pleasure of being alone with Him, reciting the Quran in the deep silence of the night as if it is being bestowed now from on high so as to be echoed by the whole universe, and receiving inspiration from the Quran and its melody in the quite of the night is all part of the preparation. *Truly, one who begins in the night, is when impression is strongest and speech more upright. Truly, for you in the daytime is a lengthy occupation. And remember you the Name of your Lord. And devote thyself to Him with total devotion.* (73:6-73:8)

The chapter follows this instruction by making it clear that there is none other than God to turn to: *The Lord of the East and of the West, there is no god but He. So take Him to yourself as your Trustee.* (73:9)

SUMMARY OF QURANIC SIGNS 73:1-73:9

WHO IS GOD, THE LORD?

Who is the Lord? Here more explanation is added to the previous signs regarding the Lord. He is the Lord of the East and the West. There is no god but He. Muhammad is commanded to take God to himself as his Trustee.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

Signs 73:1-73:9 address the Prophet directly, speaking to him as he has wrapped himself. It tells him how to prepare for the great task before him: To stand up at night and pray as the impression is strongest at night, to chant the

revelation, to remember his Lord, to devote himself to his Lord with total devotion.

Questions for Classroom Discussion

How does the Quran clarify "one who is wrapped"?
What is seclusion that the commentator refers to?
Can you give examples?
Who is God addressing in these signs?
Is God addressing more than one group of people in these signs?
Can you explain?
What does the "weighty saying" here refer to?
Why use the word "weighty"?

Questions to Ask Yourself

What words from these signs am I able to clarify? To analyze?
What does the phrase "Lord of the East and the West" mean to me?
Am I able to chant the Quran, a good chanting?

Student Assessment

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I am trying to clarify and analyze words and phrases referred to in these signs.
I am able to understand how the signs clarify what it means by "one who is wrapped".
I understand that the "weighty saying" does not mean heavy in weight, but heavy or deep in meaning.

LESSON 4. CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ACTIONS

In order for Quranic critical thinkers to develop their own point of view on an issue, they have to analyze the actions of those referred to in the Quranic signs and then evaluate them. The next step is to put actions into practice for themselves. Practice develops into good judgment—judging behavior, explaining and justifying those judgments, hearing alternative judgments and their justifications, and assessing judgments. When Quranic critical thinkers evaluate the behavior of themselves or that of others, they are aware of the criteria that they use so that the criteria themselves become part of the evaluation. They look at the consequences of their actions and see them as basic to the criteria for assessing behavior and policy.

QURANIC CHAPTER 74: THE ONE WHO IS WRAPPED IN A CLOAK (AL-MUDDATHTHIR)
SIGNS 74:1-74:7

Makkah: *O you, the one who*
wrapped himself in a cloak! (74:1)
Stand up and warn! (74:2)
And magnify your Lord (74:3)
and purify your garments (74:4)
and abandon contamination! (74:5)
And reproach not others to acquire more for yourself. (74:6)
And for thy Lord, then, have you patience. (74:7)

COMMENTARY°

Both openings: *O you, the one who is wrapped* (73:1) and *O you, the one who wrapped himself in a cloak!* (74:1) aim to prepare the Prophet for his great task, particularly when he needs to go public and address all the community with his message. He would then have to face strong opposition and compounded trouble that required such preparations. This would mean that the rest of the two chapters are revealed later, when the Prophet faces determined rejection and false accusations of fabricating his message.

The chapter begins with an address from on high assigning a great mission to the Prophet. *O you, the one who wrapped himself in a cloak! Stand up and warn!* (74:1-74:2) He is directed to prepare himself for his great task, taking the measures outlined to him in the chapter: *And magnify your Lord and purify your garments and abandon contamination! And reproach not others to acquire more for yourself. And for your Lord, then, have you patience.*(74:3-74:7) This directive ends with the need to be patient.

Summary of Quranic Signs 74:1-74:7

How are the signs directed towards the Prophet Muhammad?

Again, the Quranic revelation addresses Muhammad ordering him to stand up and warn, to glorify his Lord, to purify his garments and to put aside any impurity. He is not to acquire more for himself and he is to have patience. We might say that the purpose of these short seven signs is to begin to prepare the Prophet for his great task ahead that, as indicated here, is *to stand up and warn*. The words: "Magnify," "purify," "abandon" and "have patience" towards his Lord are all imperative forms of the respective verbs. They are commands to the Prophet that he carried out.[8]

Questions for Classroom Discussion

How do we put these signs into action?
Does practice of the commands in these signs develop good judgment?
Do we have examples where practice has not developed into good judgment? Why not? What is the difference?

Questions to Ask Yourself

Am I focused on developing good judgment from my actions?
How do I do this?
Do I look at the consequences of my actions?
Am I able to judge my own behavior?
How to I evaluate my behavior?

Student Assessment

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I understand the difference between words that are commands in the Quran from those that are not.
I understand how the Quran is clarifying for the Prophet what he should do.

INTERLUDE

THE FORMAL PRAYER

The Prophet is ordered to offer the formal prayer and so he does. A learned person said that when formal prayer is mentioned to the Prophet, Gabriel comes to him while he is on the heights of Makkah and digs a hole for him with his heel in the side of the valley from which a fountain gushs forth. Gabriel performs the ritual ablution as the Prophet watches him. This is in order to show him how to purify himself before formal prayer. Then the Prophet performs the ritual ablution as he has seen Gabriel do it. Then Gabriel offers a formal prayer with him while the Prophet prays with his formal prayer. Then Gabriel leaves him. The Prophet goes to Khadija and performs the formal prayer for her as Gabriel had done for him, and she copies him. Then he offer the formal prayer with her as Gabriel had prayed with him, and she prays as his formal prayer.[9]

Afif said: Al-Abbas ibn Abd al-Muttalib is a friend of mine who used to go often to the Yemen to buy aromatics and sell them during the fairs. While I was with him in Mina there came a man in the prime of life who performs the full rites of ablution and then stands up and offers a formal prayer. Then a woman comes out and does her ablutions and stands up and offers a formal prayer. Then out comes a youth just approaching manhood who performed his ablutions, then stands up and does the same by his side. When I asked al-Abbas what is happening, he says that it is his nephew, Muhammad ibn Abd Allah ibn Abd al-Muttalib, whom he says God has sent as a Prophet. The other is my brother's son, Ali ibn Abu Talib, who follows him in his religion. The third is his wife, Khadija bint Khuwaylid, who also follows him in his religion.

Afif said after he had become a Muslim and that the Quranic message was firmly established in his heart: Would that I had been a fourth!

A traditionalist mentions that when the time of formal prayer came, the Prophet would go out to the outskirts of Makkah accompanied by Ali, who went unbeknownst to his father, and his uncles and the rest of his people. There they offer the formal prayer, and return at nightfall. This goes on as long as God intend that it should, until one day Abu Talib comes upon them while they are praying, and says to the Prophet: O nephew, what is this religion which I see you practicing?

He replies: O uncle, this is the religion of God, His angels, His Prophets, and the religion of our father Abraham.

Then Abu Talib says to Ali: My boy, what is this religion of yours?

He answers: I believe in God and in the Prophet of God, and I declare that what he has brought is true, and I pray to God with him and follow him.

Abu Talib said: He would not call you to anything but what is good so stay with him.[10]

The Prophet Muhammad is reliably reported to have quoted God as saying that the fruits of formal prayer are shared equally between Me and My servant, and My servant will be granted what he asks for. As the worshipper recites [in

formal prayer]: *Praise belongs to God, the Lord of the worlds*, God will say: My servant has praised Me. As he recites: *The Merciful The Compassionate*, God will say: My servant has thanked Me. As he recites: *Sovereign of the Day of Judgment*, God will say: My servant has glorified Me. As he says: ***You** alone we worship and to **You** alone we pray for help*, God will say: This is between Me and My servant, and My servant will receive what he asks for. And, as he says: *Guide us on the straight path, the path of those to whom **You** were gracious, not the ones against whom **You** are angry, nor the ones who go astray,* God will say: This is for My servant, and he will be granted his wish.

Lesson 5. Critical Thinking Strategy
Questioning Deeply: Raising and Pursuing Significant Questions

When reading a sign (verse, *ayah*), critical thinkers look for the issues that underlie what the signs are stating. They come to their own understanding of the details. They then place this in a larger context. They move between the basic underlying issues and the larger picture of the issue at hand. They remain focused on the issue as they follow a line of thought. They organize the issues in their own way as they continue to raise questions about the issue as they increase their knowledge.

Quranic Chapter 1: The Opening (al-Fatihah)
Signs 1:1-1:7

Makkah: *In the Name of God,*
The Merciful, The Compassionate. (1:1)
The Praise belongs to God, Lord of the worlds, (1:2)
The Merciful, The Compassionate, (1:3)
One Who is Sovereign of the Day of Judgment. (1:4)
*You alone we worship and to **You** alone we pray for help.* (1:5)
Guide us on the straight path, (1:6)
*the path of those to whom **You** were gracious,*
*not the ones against whom **You** are angry,*
nor the ones who go astray. (1:7)

According to traditional sources, Chapter 1 was revealed at the beginning of Muhammad's messengership after signs from other chapters.[11]

The first response of the Messenger to the One God's commands after learning and knowledge is the formal prayer. The angel Gabriel teaches him the ablution and the formal prayer (*salat*), which he then teaches Khadija and Ali ibn Abu Talib.

Commentary°

Every Muslim recites this short chapter of seven signs at least seventeen times a day. The Prophet Muhammad said: A formal prayer by one who does not recite the Opening Chapter is invalid.

This short chapter contains a great deal of the central basic ideas of the Quranic message, its beliefs and concepts. It outlines many of its essential perceptions and attitudes. All this makes it clear why it is chosen for frequent recitation and why it is essential for the validity of prayer.

The chapter opens with the phrase: *In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.* (1:1)

This is recognized by the majority of scholars as a sign of the chapter, in its own right, completing its signs into seven. There is, however, a difference of opinion over whether this is so with respect to all other chapters of the Quran in which the same words appear as the opening phrase.

The divine attributes of The Merciful and The Compassionate encompass all aspects and meaning of mercy, and can only be used together with respect to God Almighty. It would be appropriate to use the attribute of The Merciful in reference to a human being, but the Quranic message requires that use of The Merciful is exclusive to God. As for the debate over which of the two adjectives denotes the wider meaning of mercy and compassion, it does not concern us here. We can conclude, however, that when combined, they encompass all aspects and dimensions of mercy.

As the invocation of God's name at the beginning of every action constitutes the first fundamental principle of the Muslim faith, the restriction of the use of *The Merciful, The Compassionate* to God alone constitutes the second principle and defines the relationship between God and the human being.

Having invoked God's Name and acknowledged His infinite mercy, one is directed to praise God and recognize His absolute sovereignty over all beings. *The Praise belongs to God, Lord of the worlds.* (1:2)

The Merciful, The Compassionate (1:3) are two attributes that encompass all meanings and aspects of mercy and compassion, and epitomize mercy as a property of God Almighty. These two attributes define the link between the Lord as Creator and His creation. It is a link based entirely on love, peace, reassurance and care, and which inspires within us a spontaneous feeling of gratitude and praise towards God.

This: *One Who is Sovereign of the Day of Judgment* (1:4) states a fundamental Quranic principle that has a most profound influence on human life: belief in the hereafter. The Quran comments on the curious fact that people have often believed in God as Creator but have failed to believe in a Day of Judgment, in a life to come, when reward and punishment are meted out to restore the balance of justice.

Human life can never be balanced and equitable until people believe that what they earn in this transient life is not the be-all and the end-all. The human being needs to have the incentive of a confident belief that another life awaits him, which is worth the struggle and the sacrifices and the effort he may have to make here in this short one. This belief brings a fundamental difference in the feelings, attitudes and behavior of those who uphold it. *You alone we worship and to You alone we pray for help.* (1:5) This sign expresses another fundamental

principle that follows logically from the preceding ones. It is also a decisive and crucial principle that draws a line between the freedom the human being gains in submitting to God and the abuse and debasement implicit in the human being's servitude to humanity.

The foremost way of communicating with God is through prayer: *Guide us on the straight path, the path of those to whom **You** were gracious, not the ones against whom **You** are angry, nor the ones who go astray.* (1:6-1:7)

With these words a believer pleads to be shown the right way and to be helped along it, which cannot be achieved without God's guidance, care and mercy. To acknowledge that is in itself a recognition of God's sovereignty and dominance over all things and events.

This, then, is the Opening Chapter, the chapter selected for frequent daily recitation, without which Quranic prayers are invalid. Despite its brevity, it contains some of the most fundamental principles of the Quranic faith and certain insights that arise from them.

Summary Quranic Signs 1:1-1:7

Who is God, the Lord?

In the first four Quranic revelations, the name of God is not mentioned, but rather one of the names of God, Lord. Here for the first time, we learn the Name of God (Allah) and that God is The Merciful, The Compassionate to whom belongs Praise. What does it mean that God is Merciful? Compassionate? Why are these stated twice? These are just some basic questions that will awaken in you. In addition to the information provided that God is The Merciful, The Compassionate and that all Praise belongs to God, we learn that He is also Sovereign of the Day of Judgment.

How are the signs directed towards the Community?

Whenever we are praised, we should know that praise belongs to God and not to us. The believers hearing this for the first time might have wondered what that was. Then we are commanded to ask for His guidance on the straight path, the path of those to whom He was gracious and not the path of those who have gone astray. Not knowing any more than this for the early believers must have left them in great anticipation for further explanation of the straight path and what is, as well.

Questions for Classroom Discussion

How does "praise belongs to God" come to be the way things are now?
What are the characteristics of the Lord of the worlds?
How do the signs say to worship God?

Questions to Ask Yourself

What conclusion do I come to about how to worship God?
What categories do I see in these signs?
What solution do I find for being on the straight path?
Why would the Prophet say these seven signs should be recited in every formal prayer?
Why do people worship God?
What are the main concepts in these signs?
What are the moral implications in these signs?
What are the most significant questions about these signs?

Student Assessment

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I am able to ask questions about questions.
I am able to understand why questioning deeply helps my understanding of these Quranic signs.

Lesson 6. Critical Thinking Strategy Using Information, Data, Facts, Observation Experiences, Reasoned Judgments

Questions of **information** force you to assess the quality of information, how you are organizing or giving meaning to information. Any questions you ask require information. There are three aspects to this:

1. Thinking has a goal, agenda, purpose.
2. Questions being asked either explicitly or implicitly.
3. Information is being used.

What information is being used?

Where did the information come from?

How can that information be assessed?

If you have information, information never uses itself. Information never gives itself meaning. It deduces implications from itself. Information must be treated by the mind. It must be interpreted. Information must be given a meaning. As Quranic critical thinkers you must make certain to distinguish hard data from the inferences or conclusions that are drawn from them.• You want to identify the key information the Quran is using in these signs to support its main arguments. Look for facts, experiences, and/or data being used to support its conclusions.

Quranic Chapter 111: The Flame (al-Lahab) Signs 111:1-111:5

Makkah: *Ruined were the hands*
of Abu Lahab and he was ruined. (111:1)
His wealth availed him not nor whatever he earned. (111:2)
He will roast in a fire, possessing flames (111:3)
and his woman, the carrier of firewood, (111:4)
around her long neck is a rope of palm fibers. (111:5)

Commentary°

Abu Lahab, together with his wife, Arwa, known as Umm Jamil, were among the most hostile opponents of God's Messenger and the ideas he propagated.

After the beginning of the revelation, Abu Lahab orders his two sons to renounce Muhammad's two daughters to whom they were to marry before Muhammad's prophetic assignment. Abu Lahab does this in order to burden the Prophet with their living expenses.

Thus, Abu Lahab and his wife continue with their persistent onslaught against Muhammad and his message. The fact that they are close neighbors of Muhammad makes the situation even worse. We

are told that Umm Jamil[12] used to carry thorns and sharp wood and place them along the Prophet's path—although it is thought that the phrase the carrier of firewood' in the chapter is used only metaphorically to indicate her lies and malice towards him.

This chapter is revealed as a counterattack against Abu Lahab's and his wife's hostile campaign. God takes it upon Himself to say the final word on behalf of His Messenger: *Ruined were the hands of Abu Lahab and he was ruined.* (111:1)

The Arabic term rendered here as '*ruined*' also signifies failure and cutting off. The term is used twice in two different senses. It is used first as a prayer, while in the second instance it implies that the prayer has been already answered. So, in one short sign, an action is realized which draws the curtain upon a battle scene. What later follows is merely a description of what takes place with the remark: *His wealth availed him not nor whatever he earned.* (111:2) He can have no escape. He is defeated, vanquished and damned.

This was his fate in this world, but in the hereafter as well: *He will roast in a fire, possessing flames.* (111:3) The fire is described as having flames in order to emphasize that it is raging.

RHYTHM OF THE SIGNS

The language of this chapter achieves remarkable harmony between the subject matter and the atmosphere built around it. Abu Lahab will be plunged into a fire with *lahab*, which is the Arabic for flames; and his wife who carries the wood, a fuel, will be met with the same fire with a palm-fiber rope around her neck. Hell, with its fiercely burning flames, will be inhabited by Abu Lahab. At the same time his wife, who collects thorns and sharp woods, materials that can significantly increase the blaze of a fire, puts them all in [Muhammad's] way. Therefore, she will, in time, be dragged into hell with a rope tied round her neck, bundled like firewood. How perfectly matched are the words and the pictures portrayed: the punishment is presented as being of the same nature as the deed: wood, ropes, fire and flames (*lahab*)!

Phonetically, the words are arranged in a way that provides wonderful harmony between the sounds made by the tying of wood into bundles and pulling the neck by ropes. You will not fail to note that the Arabic sounds like a hard sharp tug, analogous to that of bundles of wood or an unwilling person being dragged by the neck into a wild fire; all is in phase with the fury and violent, bellicose tone that goes with the theme of the chapter. Thus, in five short signs making up one of the shortest chapters in the Quran, the vocal melodies click neatly with the actual movement of the scene portrayed.

This extremely rich and powerful style led Umm Jamil to claim that the Prophet is, in fact, satirizing she and her husband. This arro-

gant and vain woman cannot get over being referred to by such a humiliating phrase as '*the carrier of firewood*,' who '*shall have a rope of palm fibers round her neck.*' Her rage grows wilder when the chapter became popular among the Arab tribes who greatly appreciated such fine literary style!

SUMMARY OF QURANIC SIGNS 111:1-111:3

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

Suddenly the Community of believers and others who hear the recitation recognize that the Quranic message does not shy away from retribution towards a person or persons who are hostile towards Muhammad. It is the first time in the revelations that the Quran directly attacks a specific person who is a believer of the corrupting system of tribal honor over all other beliefs. Abu Lahab is a member of the same Hashim Clan of the Quraysh as Muhammad. He is his half-uncle on his father's side, yet the Quranic message does not hesitate to confront it by condemning Abu Lahab and his wife to the fire. This has great implications for the future of this community and those who oppose it. It was particularly important for the oppressed and downtrodden to hear these words as many of them had suffered greatly under the Makkan tribal social system of tribal honor and their slogan: My tribe right or wrong.

QUESTIONS FOR CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

What information do we need to know who Abu Lahab was?
What data are relevant to this problem?
Do we need to gather more information?
Is this information relevant to our purpose or goal?
On what information are you basing that comment?

QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK TO DISCIPLINE YOUR THINKING

What precise question are we trying to answer?
Is that the best question to ask in this situation?
Is there a more important question we should be addressing?
Does this question capture the real issue we are facing?
Is there a question we should answer before we attempt to answer this question?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I understand that Abu Jahl and his wife were cursed in these signs.
I understand that Abu Jahl thought his wealth and what he earned would save him from ruination.

EPILOGUE

THE QURAYSH CLANS

We know, Muhammad is a member of the Hashim Clan of the Quraysh tribe. The Quraysh tribe consists of 14 clans. The clans are: Hashim, al-Muttalib, Taym, Zuhrah, Adiyy, al-Harith ibn Fihr, Amir, Asad, Nawfal, Abd Shams, Makhzum, Sahm, Jumah, and Abd al-Dar.

The place of the clan of **Hashim** in Makkan society is under the leadership of Abu Talib, the brother of Abu Jahl, but it is losing ground. Abu Jahl becomes the leader upon the death of Abu Talib in 620 CE.

The **al-Muttalib** Clan has apparently become very weak and is much dependent on Hashim.

The **Taym** Clan also counts for little in the affairs of Makkah. In Muhammad's youth the leading member of it is Abd Allah ibn Judan, for the meeting to set up the Hilf al-Fudul had been held in his house, and we also hear of Muhammad meeting Abu Jahl there.

The clan of **Zuhrah** seems to have been more prosperous than that of Taym and al-Muttalib. Certain branches have business relations, cemented by marriage, with Abd Shams; the mother of Sad ibn Abi Waqqas is a granddaughter of Umayyah ibn Abd Shams and Abd al-Rahman ibn Awf had married daughters of Utbah ibn Rabiah ibn Abd Shams and his brother Shayba.

The **Adiyy** Clan had formerly belonged to the Ahlaf. The general position of the Adiyy is probably also deteriorating.

The **al-Harith ibn Fihr** Clan is on the border-line between Quraysh of the Hollow and Quraysh of the Outskirts. Its position has perhaps been improving, but it is not of first importance.

The **Amir** Clan is another clan on the border-line between Quraysh of the Hollow and Quraysh of the Outskirts.

The **Asad** Clan had evidently grown in importance and has left its old associates of the Hilf al-Fudul (Alliance of the Virtuous) to enter the circles of big business.

The **Nawfal** Clan does not seem to have been strong in numbers, but its leading men have considerable influence, perhaps because of their close association with Abd al-Shams. They work in with the Makhzum group, but are not subservient to them, since at times along with Asad (and Amir) they would go their own way.

The **Abd al-Shams** Clan disputes with that of Makhzum the leading place in Makkah, but both realized the wise sphere of common interest and the rivalry is not unduly bitter.

The **Makhzum** are apparently the dominant political group in Makkah at the time of the revelation. Abu Jahl is the leader of those who would oppose Muhammad.

The **Sahm** Clan is one of the more powerful clans. It is against

them that the Hilf al-Fudul (Alliance of the Virtuous) was ostensibly directed in the first place and it is to them that the Adiyy appeal for help when they prove unable to stand up to Abd al-Shams.

The **Jumah** Clan is also powerful, but not quite as powerful as the Sahm Clan. The leadership is in the hands of the family of Khalaf ibn Wahb, first in that of Umayyah ibn Khalaf, and at a later time in that of Wahb ibn Umayr ibn Wahb ibn Khalaf.

The **Abd al-Dar** Clan had once been foremost of the sons of Qusayy, and his descendants retained certain privileges such as that of carrying the standard, but they now counted for little in Makkan affairs.[13]

APPENDIX 1. CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
RAISING QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, ISSUES

The Quranic text asks hundreds of questions in reasoning something out. There are many issues that end with a question, many rhetorical, the answer to which the Quranic message itself implies. One of the best ways to become critical thinkers is to understand how the Quran raises questions.

Asking questions is an important aspect of Quranic learning. The Hadith are responses to questions asked about the Prophet's *Sunna*. The *fatwa* issued by clerics is based on questions they are asked. Within the Quranic view, we have a direct connection to God and would only consult a cleric if we had a question about some aspect of our worship.

QURANIC CHAPTER 96: REMAINING SIGNS
SIGNS 96:6-96:19

Makkah: *No indeed!*
The human being is, truly, defiant. (96:6)
He considered himself self-sufficient. (96:7)
Truly, to your Lord is the returning. (96:8)
Have you yourself considered he who prohibits (96:9)
a servant when he invoked blessings? (96:10)
Have you considered if he had been on guidance (96:11)
or commanded God-consciousness? (96:12)
Have you considered if he denied and turned away? (96:13)
Knows he not that God sees? (96:14)
No indeed! Truly, if he refrains himself not,
We will, surely, lay hold of him by the forelock, (96:15)
a lying, inequitable forelock. (96:16)
And let him call to his conclave. (96:17)
We will call to the guards of hell. (96:18)
No indeed! Truly, obey you him not but prostrate yourself to God
and be near to Him. (96:19)

COMMENTARY°

ARROGANCE AND INGRATITUDE

The second part of the chapter deals with human beings' transgression. *The human being is, truly, defiant. He considered himself self-sufficient. Truly, to your Lord is the returning.* (96:6-96:8) It is God who gives to human beings in abundance and makes him independent. He also creates and teaches him and extends to him His generous treatment. But people in general—except for those guarded by faith—are not thankful for their independence which is made possible by what they are given. They do not recognize the source of this grace,

which is the same as the source of their creation, knowledge and livelihood. They behave arrogantly and transgress all limits instead of being dutiful and thankful.

The image of the transgressing, conceited person who has forgotten his origin is followed by a comment charged with an implicit warning: *Truly, to your Lord is the returning.* (96:8) Where can this proud and overweening person then turn?

At the same time a fundamental rule of the Quranic message is emphasized. That is, all must refer to God in every matter, thought or action. He is the only resort and refuge.

The third section of this short chapter tackles a particularly appalling form of tyranny. Its description in the inimitable Quranic style fills us with wonder and dismay that it should take place at all. *Have you yourself considered he who prohibits a servant when he invoked blessings? Have you considered if he had been on guidance or commanded God-consciousness? Have you considered if he denied and turned away? Knows he not that God sees?* (96:9-96:14)

Our dismay is enhanced by the manner of expression that takes the form of address and conversation, using short sentences that follow in rapid succession. The effect can hardly ever be produced by ordinary written language. Look at this ghastly business actually taking place! *Have you yourself considered he who prohibits a servant when he invoked blessings?* (96:9-96:10) Have you seen this repulsive sight? Have you realized how repugnance is doubled by the fact that the person being prevented from his formal prayers is in fact following divine guidance. He merely enjoins God-consciousness, yet he is discouraged and told to desist!

Yet the transgressor outdoes himself by taking a still more abhorrent stand: *Have you considered if he denied and turned away?* (96:13) The closing note is one of implicit warning, similar to that of a previous sign: *Knows he not that God sees?* (96:14) He sees everything: The denial of truth, the turning away from it, as well as the prevention of believers from asking for God's blessings. Since God sees all, something must be done on the basis of what He sees. This is the implicit warning.

Thus, we have a scene of tyranny trying to suppress the call of faith and obedience to God. This is followed immediately by a stern warning stated explicitly this time: *No indeed! Truly, if he refrains himself not, We will, surely, lay hold of him by the forelock, a lying, inequitable forelock. And let him call to his conclave. We will call to the guards of hell.* (96:15-96:18) The Arabic term used for '*lay hold of*' has a marked violence about it. This is by the forelock, the part of the head raised high by every conceited tyrant. It undoubtedly deserves to be hit violently: *A lying, inequitable forelock.* The tyrant may think of

calling his clan and supporters to come to his aid: *And let him call to his conclave.* On the other side: *We will call to the guards of hell* and they are powerful and ruthless. The outcome of the battle is never in doubt.

The chapter, however, is general in its significance. It refers to every obedient believer calling people to follow the path of God and to every tyrant who forbids prayer, threatens the believers and acts arrogantly. The concluding divine instruction is therefore: *No indeed! Truly, obey you him not but prostrate yourself to God and be near to Him.* (96:19)

Some authentic reports say that Chapter 96, with the exception signs 1-5, refers to Abu Jahl who once passed by Muhammad while he is praying at the Station of Abraham, close to the Kabah. He turns to him and says: Muhammad, have I not ordered you to stop these practices? He also added some warning to Muhammad who gives him a stern reply. This is possibly the time when Muhammad seized Abu Jahl by the collar and warned him of his impending doom.

Abu Jahl says: Muhammad, what do you threaten me with? I am sure I have the largest following in this valley.

Therefore, the revelation: *Let him call his conclave.*

Ibn Abbas, Muhammad's learned Companion, says in comment: Had Abu Jahl called them, the angels charged with giving out punishment would have taken him away then and there.

SUMMARY OF QURANIC SIGNS

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET?

These remaining signs of Chapter 96 refer to the ungrateful in the early Makkan years. God describes them for the Prophet as ones who are defiant, ones who considers themselves self-sufficient because they deny that to God is the return. He asks the Prophet if the Prophet had not thought about those who prevent God's servants from worshipping God. Has this person been guided? Has this person been commanded to be God-conscious? What happens when these ungrateful deny the message and turn away? Do they not know that God sees? God tells the Prophet not to obey these people, but to prostrate to God and draw near to Him.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

God then explains what God will do to the ungrateful if they do not refrain themselves from preventing people worshipping God. He will grab them from their forelock. Let the ungrateful call to their groups. God will call the guards of hell.

How to Raise Questions

To formulate a question in a clear and relevant way
To choose from among alternative expressions
To discuss the advantages of different types of the question at issue
To recognize key common elements in statements of different questions
To structure the articulation of problems so as to make a possible solution more apparent.

Questions for Classroom Discussion

What examples can I give to further illuminate these ideas?
What counter-examples can I cite?
How could the Quranic message respond to my counter-examples?
Who can best phrase this question?

Questions You Can Ask to Discipline Your Thinking

What information do we need to answer the question?
What conclusions seem justified in light of the facts?
What is our point of view? Do we need to consider another?
Is there another way to look at the question?
What are some related questions we need to consider?

Student Assessment

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I am able to analyze the actions of the ungrateful and evaluate them.
I am becoming aware of the criteria to be used so to judge my own behavior.

Appendix 2. Critical Thinking Strategy Making Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusion, Solutions

Questions of interpretation force you to examine how you are organizing or giving meaning to information. We further develop our reasoning or discernment faculty by understanding how to make interpretations, inferences (a conclusion reached on the basis of evidence and reasoning) and/or conclusions based on the Quranic message. Thinking differs from reasoning. Thinking is simply a succession of thoughts that are not necessarily related to one another. Reasoning, on the other hand is where one thought leads directly to another. When students actively engage in reasoning, it is called 'to infer' or to make inferences. When students infer something from a Quranic sign from something else that it says, they move from the second thought back to the first thought because they infer that the second thought makes it reasonable for them to believe in the truth of the first thought.

Quranic Chapter 68: Remaining Signs Signs 68:5-68:16

Makkah: *You will perceive*
and they will perceive (68:5)
which of you is the one who is demented. (68:6)
Truly, your Lord, He is greater in knowledge
of whoever went astray from His Way
and He is greater in knowledge
of ones who are truly guided. (68:7)
Then, obey not ones who deny. (68:8)
They wished that you would compromise with them
and they would compromise with you. (68:9)
But obey you not every worthless swearer, defamer, (68:10)
one who goes about with slander, slandering, (68:11)
who delays good, a sinful, exceeder of limits, (68:12)
cruel and after that, dishonorable, (68:13)
because he had been possessor of wealth and children. (68:14)
When Our signs are recounted to him, he said:
Fables of the ancient ones! (68:15)
We will mark him on the snout! (68:16)
Madinah (68:17)[14]
Madinah (68:18)
Madinah (68:19)
Madinah (68:20)
Madinah (68:21)
Madinah (68:22)
Madinah (68:23)

Madinah (68:24)
Madinah (68:25)
Madinah (68:26)
Madinah (68:27)
Madinah (68:28)
Madinah (68:29)
Madinah (68:30)
Madinah (68:31)
Madinah (68:32)
Madinah (68:33)

COMMENTARY°

God reassures His Messenger about the immediate future and how things will develop with those ungrateful who hurled such lies at him. He warns them that their true situation will be publicized and their falsehood be made public: *You will perceive and they will perceive which of you is the one who is demented. Truly, your Lord, He is greater in knowledge of whoever went astray from His Way and He is greater in knowledge of ones who are truly guided.* (68:5-68:7)

This promise by God confirms that the future will make clear the true nature of the Prophet and those who denied his message. The future will prove which party was afflicted or had gone astray. God reassured him that his Lord: *Truly, your Lord, He is greater in knowledge of whoever went astray from His Way and He is greater in knowledge of ones who are truly guided.* (68:7)

They are prepared to compromise everything, retaining only some appearances in return for a gesture of compromise from him. They do not have a faith that they consider to embody the truth; they are only keen to retain some appearances: *Then, obey not ones who deny.* (68:8) *They wished that you would compromise with them and they would compromise with you.* (68:8-68:9)

The Prophet, however, maintains a decisive firmness, refusing to give up even a small part of his faith. Additionally, he is extremely well mannered, kind and benevolent towards his tribesmen, eager to make things easy for them. With regard to faith, he is committed, obedient of Gods' instructions: *Then, obey not ones who deny.* (68:8)

THE IMPORTANCE OF MORAL TRAITS

The importance of the moral element is again stressed when the Prophet is ordered not to obey one particular ungrateful person. We have a full list of the terrible and shameful qualities of this person, who is then threatened with humiliation: *But obey you not every worthless swearer, defamer, one who goes about with slander, slandering,*

who delays good, a sinful, exceeder of limits, cruel and after that, ignoble, because he had been possessor of wealth and children. When Our signs are recounted to him, he said: Fables of the ancient ones! We will mark him on the snout! (68:10-68:16)

The Quran lists here nine of the bad characteristics of the ungrateful.

1. He is a swearer which suggests that he always does so. Only a liar swears much because he feels that people do not believe him. Therefore, he resorts to swearing to persuade people to accept what he says.

2. Moreover, he is contemptible, someone who does not even respect himself. Nor do people trust his word. This is proven by the fact that he feels the need to swear all the time to overcome peoples mistrust. Despite the fact that he has wealth, children and position, he remains contemptible. It is often the case that a tyrant remains contemptible even though he holds power and authority. Likewise, dignity is a personal trait which remains distinctive of its possessor even though he has nothing of the material luxuries of this world.

3. He is a slanderer who disrespects people and tries to insult them by word and gesture, in their presence or absence. This is a characteristic that the Quranic message brands as most hateful because it is contrary to gallantry, self-respect and propriety of conduct towards others in so far as respecting their dignity, regardless of their social position. The Quran denounces this characteristic in several places: Woe to every taunting, slandering backbiter (104:1) Believers! No men shall deride other men: it may well be that those [whom they deride] are better than themselves. And no women [shall deride other] women: it may well be that those [whom they deride] are better than themselves. And neither shall you defame yourselves, nor insult one another by [opprobrious] epithets. (49:11) All the actions mentioned in this verse are types of slander.

4. Another characteristic of this person is that he goes about with defaming tales. He goes around, telling people what will spoil their relations, create rancor in their hearts and destroy their ties. This is an evil and contemptible quality that no one who respects himself and wants to be respected will entertain. People realize that the one who tells tales about others is unworthy of respect. Even those who listen to him will not respect him, because they know he is evil.

The Quranic message naturally denounces this despicable and shameful characteristic in strong terms. It spoils peoples hearts and destroys friendships. It degrades the one who does it before it spoils relations between others. It undermines the person's own character even before undermining society. It creates mistrust between people

and often lands the innocent in trouble.

5. Moreover, this person is a hinderer of good, preventing it from reaching him and others. He used to prevent people from accepting the divine faith, even though it is the sum of all goodness. Furthermore, to follow whenever he noticed that any of his children or clansmen leaned towards the Prophet, he would say to them: If any of you were Muhammad's religion, I would never give him an iota. Thus he tried his utmost to prevent them from accepting the Quranic message. Therefore, the Quran records this as one of his characteristics.

6. He is also an aggressor, stepping over the limits of right and justice. His aggression is leveled against the Prophet and the Muslims on the one hand, and against his own family and clan on the other, given he prevented them from accepting the Quranic message. Aggression is an evil quality which the Quran and the Prophet denounce in clear terms. The Quranic message forbids it in any form, even in one's approach to food and drink: Eat of the wholesome things which We have provided for you and do not transgress. (20:81) Both justice and moderation are essential qualities of the Quranic code.

7. What is more is that he is sinful, committing all sorts of sins so as to earn this description, without specifying what it is he does. Thus, committing sin becomes his essential characteristic.

8. The next characteristic is stated in translation as cruel, but in the Arabic original this is *utull*, which by its very sound connotes a host of features that no group of words can adequately describe. The one who is *utull* is cruel, unfriendly, gluttonous, heavy handed, mean, given to treating others badly. Abu al-Darda, a Companion of the Prophet, defined such a person as the one who is covetous, ill-mannered, gluttonous, greedy for money, tight-fisted. The word *utull* thus reveals a hateful character.

9. On top of all these evil qualities, this enemy of the Quranic message is also described as given to dishonor. The Arabic word used here is *zamm*, which has more than one meaning. One of these denotes someone who is attached to a group of people, but he is of suspect descent. None of them knows his parentage. Another meaning denotes a person who lacks morality and who is known by his many evil deeds. This second meaning is perhaps more true of al-Walid ibn al-Mughayrah, but the use of this word here makes him contemptible even though he was also proud and arrogant.

These personal qualities are followed with a denunciation of this person's attitude to divine revelations: *Because he had been possessor of wealth and children. When Our signs are recounted to him, he said: Fables of the ancient ones!* (68:14-68:15) How ungrateful! How can anyone enjoy God's favors of children and wealth and then deride His revelations, ridicule His Messenger and denounce His message? By

itself, this is equal to all the evil qualities already mentioned.

Therefore a warning is issued to him by the Almighty. The warning hits at the very position of pride on account of his wealth and children, in the same way as the earlier mention of his personal characteristics hit at his pride in his position among his people. He hears now a threat that will inevitably be fulfilled: *We will mark him on the snout!* (68:16)

The Arabic word *khurtum*, translated here as *snout*, means, among other things, the nose of a wild pig. Perhaps this is the meaning intended here, denoting his nose. In Arabic, the nose connotes dignity. People refer to an honorable person as one of high nose, while a humiliated one is described as having his nose in the dust. Therefore, the threat of branding him on his nose connotes double humiliation: Being branded like slaves used to be, and his nose being referred to as a snout or pig's nose.

Undoubtedly, these signs fell like a fatal blow for al-Walid. He belonged to a community that attached much importance to avoiding abuse by a poet, even though the abuse was no more than false allegations. How about such a truthful description by the Creator of the universe, in such an inimitable style, and in the Quran which is echoed throughout the universe for the rest of time! It was a fatal blow that this enemy of the Quranic message and its noble Prophet deserved.

What the Quran advocates is a clear, straightforward, simple, yet comprehensive and profound message that is fully in line with the original monotheism preached by Abraham, but to a standard of perfection that fits its being the last message to humanity, addressing them in their stage of maturity and remaining intact to the end of time.

Take, for example, the notion of multiple deities that assigns partners to God. In this respect, the Arabs worshipped angels, statues, the jinn and spirits. Their beliefs were a medley of corrupt and hollow notions. Compare these with the noble picture the Quran paints of God and His majestic power that takes care of every creature. The gulf between the two is immense.

Similarly wide is the gulf between the class system that prevailed in Arabia, the clerical nature of its religion and the monopoly of privileges, such as custodianship of the Kabah, on the one hand and the equality of all people preached by the Quranic message and every individuals direct relation with God as explained in the Quran, on the other. Likewise, the morality advocated by the Messenger was a world apart from the values that prevailed in Arabia's society based as it was on tribal honor.

This great gulf between the new faith and the beliefs, values and practices of the ungrateful was sufficient to bring about direct conflict between the two camps. There were, however, other factors which per-

haps were, to the ungrateful, more serious than the issue of faith. Despite the fact that the Prophet was a descendent of the noblest family in the Quraysh, the very fact that he was not the chief of his clan made it very difficult for their chiefs to accept his leadership. In that social environment, position in one's clan was of paramount importance.

We see in Makkan chapters how God bestows His abundant care on His Messenger and his small group of followers, consoling and commending him and those who accepted his message. In this respect, God gives prominence to the moral aspect embodied in the Quranic message and its bearer, Muhammad. He refutes what the ungrateful alleged about him. He reassures the persecuted believers that He is on their side, so they do not have to think about their enemies, powerful and wealthy as they may seem.

Through such comforting, praise and reassurance, coupled with fearsome warnings and an uncompromising attack on the ungrateful, (in these signs 68:6-68:16) God Himself takes up the fight. We can discern the features of that period when the believers were few, weak, suffering persecution and hardship and facing a determined effort to uproot the tree of their new faith. In the chapter's style (Chapter 68), the words it uses and in its themes we identify certain features of the environment in which the new message functioned. Essentially, it was characterized by naive concepts, petty concerns, and the lack of any profound thinking.

SUMMARY OF QURANIC SIGNS

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

Several reports speak of what the ungrateful in Makkah are trying to achieve by way of compromise with the Prophet so that he will stop criticizing their practice of idolatry. They will hope that he will give them something that will save face for them if they were to follow him. In this, they are no different from any negotiator seeking a compromise.

The Quranic signs say that the Prophet does not compromise an iota of his faith even during the direst period of his life in Makkah where he and his few followers are under siege, suffering immense persecution. He never withhold a word that needs to be uttered in the face of such tyrants. He never seeks to soften their stance or to avoid their persecution by such compromise. Nor does he ever hesitate to clarify any point that was closely or remotely relevant to his faith.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The Quran lists here nine of the bad characteristics of the ungrateful.

QUESTIONS FOR CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

How would you describe the nine negative traits of someone who is ungrateful?

Can you give examples of experiences you have had with someone who showed these character traits?

Questions to Ask Yourself

What would I do if someone confronted me and I realized they had one of the nine traits?

Do I have the same values as the Prophet and his early followers in Makkah?

What would it take for me to compromise my values?

Student Assessment

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I am able to interpret the nine characteristics of the ungrateful and give examples of people I know who have these character traits.

I understand how the Prophet could not compromise his faith.

CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY

ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ARGUMENTS AND INTERPRETATIONS

Critical thinkers try to overlook their preconceptions when agreeing or disagreeing with a conclusion. They use tools of analysis to try to understand the reason behind the issue and to determine its relative strengths and weaknesses. One of the tools of analysis is to continue to ask for reasons and to consider other points of views. They pay special attention to possible strong arguments with which they disagree because they are aware of the tendency to ignore, oversimplify, distort or otherwise unfairly dismiss them. They analyze questions and place conflicting arguments and interpretations in opposition to one another as a means of highlighting key concepts, assumptions, implications, and so forth. When giving or being given an interpretation, students learn to recognize the difference between evidence and interpretation, explore the assumptions on which interpretations are based and propose and evaluate alternative interpretations for their relative strength. As autonomous thinkers, they consider competing theories and develop their own theories.

QURANIC CHAPTER 68: REMAINING SIGNS

SIGNS 68:34-68:52

Makkah: *Truly, for ones who are God-conscious are Gardens of Bliss with their Lord.*(68:34)
Will We make ones who submit to God as ones who sin? (68:35)
What is the matter with you? How you give judgment! (68:36)
Or have you a Book by which you study (68:37)
that you will have in it whatever you specify? (68:38)
Or are there oaths from Us, ones that reach through to the Day of Resurrection providing that you will have what you yourselves give as judgment? (68:39)
Ask them, then, which of them will be a guarantor for that. (68:40)
Or have they ones they ascribe as associate with God? Then, let them approach with their ascribed associates if they had been ones who are sincere. (68:41)
On a Day the great calamity will be uncovered and they will be called to prostration, then, they will not be able to do so. (68:42)
Their sight will be that which is humbled. Abasement will come over them and they had before this been called to prostration while they were ones who are healthy. (68:43)
So forsake Me with him who denies this discourse. We will draw them on gradually from where they know not (68:44)
and I will grant indulgence to them.

Truly, My cunning is sure. (68:45)
*Or have **you** asked them for a compensation,*
so that they would be weighed down
from something owed? (68:46)
Or have they knowledge of the unseen with them
so that they write it down? (68:47)
Madinah: Jonah Book 28 (68:48)
Madinah: Jonah Book 28 (68:49)
Madinah: Jonah Book 28 (68:50)
Makkah: *It was almost as if those who were ungrateful*
*looked at **you** sternly with their sight when they heard*
the Remembrance, and they say:
He is one who is possessed! (68:51)
And it is, certainly,
not but a Remembrance to the worlds. (68:52)

Commentary°

Can They Be Equal?

The warning against punishment in the life to come and a war in this present life is made within the argument and challenge this passage delineates. This has the effect of heightening the argument and increasing the pressure the challenge represents. The passage starts with a rhetorical question: *Will We make ones who submit* (Muslims) *to God as ones who sin?* (68:35) We do not know for certainty when their section of chapter 68 was revealed, but if it was close to the time of the signs 68:1-68:4, it is the first time the revelation refers to the believers as "muslim," "one who submits."

This question refers to the outcome of the two parties that has already been stated. This is a question that admits only one answer. No, it cannot be! Those who submit to God can never be treated on the same footing as those who are knowingly guilty. No logic and no standard of justice allows that the guilty and those who submit to God should face the same result. Therefore, the chapter puts a second rhetorical question to them: *What is the matter with you? How you give judgment!* (68:36) How do you judge matters so as to make the two equal? This certainly cannot be.

The signs moves on to add an element of sarcasm: *Or have you a Book by which you study that you will have in it whatever you specify?* (68:37-68:38) It is a sarcastic question that asks whether or not they have a book and if their studies lead them to make a judgment that no logic or fair standard would accept.

Or are there oaths from Us, ones that reach through to the Day of Resurrection providing that you will have what you yourselves give as judgment? (68:39) If they do not have a book to rely on in their judg-

ment, then they must have the alternative spelled out in this sign: A binding pledge by God that remains in force until the Day of Judgment, one to the effect that they will have whatever they decide. They may choose as they please. But this is not the case: They have no such oaths or pledges. How can they, then, assert their claims? On what basis do they make such claims?

Ask them, then, which of them will be a guarantor for that? (68:40) Who of them can pledge his word of honor that they have such an agreement with God, or that the pledges He has made them will remain in force until the Day of Judgment?

Or have they ones they ascribe as associate with God? Then, let them approach with their ascribed associates if they had been ones who are sincere. (68: 41) They used to associate partners with God, but the chapter makes these their own partners, not God's. It challenges them to invoke these partners if they believe that what they say is true. The question here is when will they invoke such partners? *On a Day the great calamity will be uncovered and they will be called to prostration, then, they will not be able to do so. Their sight will be that which is humbled. Abasement will come over them and they had before this been called to prostration while they were ones who are healthy.* (68:42-68:43)

The signs continue painting their sorry picture: *Their sight will be that which is humbled. Abasement will come over them and they had before this been called to prostration while they were ones who are healthy,* safe, sound. (68:43) Such arrogant, tyrannical people with downcast eyes and overwhelming ignominy are shown in perfect contrast to the attitude they displayed in this life when they were extremely arrogant.

The impression of humiliation and disgrace is clear and deliberate. Yet in their humble position, enduring much humiliation, they are reminded of the arrogance that brought about this suffering: *Their sight will be that which is humbled. Abasement will come over them and they had before this been called to prostration while they were ones who are healthy.* (68:43) When they were able to do it willingly, they arrogantly refused to prostrate themselves before God. Now, in the hereafter, when the life of this world is behind them, they wish they could respond to the invitation, but they cannot so prostrate themselves.

In their utterly dire situation, they face a stern warning: *So forsake Me with him who denies this discourse. We will draw them on gradually from where they know not.* (68:44) The warning shakes their very foundations.

The Almighty then discloses the fighting plan against this little,

weak creature: *I will grant indulgence to them. Truly, My cunning is sure.* (68:45) If God allows them time when they indulge in aggression and injustice and persist in error, this is merely to lead them on to their miserable end. They will thus carry their full burdens. They will come on that day burdened with sin, deserving all humiliation and disgrace.

The scene of the Day of Judgment, with all that it involves of stress and hardship, and the strong warning are followed with a continuation of the argument that wonders at their singular attitude: *Or have you asked them for a compensation, so that they would be weighed down from something owed?* (68:46) Is it that you, Prophet, demand a hefty fee for providing guidance to them, and is it this fee that causes them to turn away and deny the divine faith, preferring to face such a miserable end? Could it be this: *Or have they knowledge of the unseen with them so that they write it down?* (68:47) Are they so certain of what is in store for them and, as a result, have no worry about it? Have they already written it down, or was it written according to what they wish? No answer is needed here. How, then, can they adopt such an attitude?

The chapter concludes with an image of the ungrateful as they received the Prophet's call. They are full of hatred and grudges shown in the way they look at him as though they want to do away with him. The Quran gives the best description of their looks: *It was almost as if those who were ungrateful looked at you sternly with their sight when they heard the Remembrance.* (68:51)

Their looks almost affect the Prophet's feet so as to make him lose his balance and trip. It is a superb image describing the hatred embedded in these looks that boil with anger. Added to these hateful looks is their false allegation: *And they say: He is one who is possessed!* (68:51) The image is taken from a scene of public address when the message is openly presented to people and they are called upon to accept it. It cannot be anywhere other than a public place where some of the most determined opponents are present, reacting with such looks that reflect a deep-seated hatred.

The final comment in the chapter is: *And it is, certainly, not but a Remembrance to the worlds.* (68:52) Such a reminder cannot be presented by a madman. God tells the truth, while falsehood emanates from lying fabricators.

We highlight the phrase: To the worlds, used at the end of the chapter. We should remember that this revelation was Makkan, occurring in the early days of the revelation, when the message was met with hard denial and the Prophet received such spiteful looks, when the ungrateful were fighting it with all their might. At this low ebb in its fortunes, the message of the Quran declares its universal nature because this is part of its essence, right from its very first day. Thus, did

God will it to be and thus did He determine its direction from its early days. Thus, will it remain until the end of time. God has willed it to be so, and He is its sponsor who protects and defends it. It is He who fights its battle against its opponents. As for its advocates, they only have to remain steadfast, patient in adversity until God, the best of judges, makes His judgment.

Summary of Quranic Signs

Who is God, the Lord?

God wants this truth of the battle being His battle to be firmly understood by the believers. It is His issue and He settles it. When He assigns a role in it to the believers, it is only because He wants to put them to a fair test, for which they earn a good reward. As for the war itself, it is He who fights it, and it is He who assigns its victory. He is able to conduct this war without them. When they participate in it, they are one of the tools He uses, not the only tool. There are many Quranic texts that assert this truth in all situations. It also fits well with the Quranic concept of God's will, rules and laws, as well as the nature of human efforts made to accomplish God's will. These efforts are no more than a tool in God's hand.

A remarkable statement, *so leave Me and whoever denies this discourse. We will draw them on gradually from where they know not.* (68:44) It is then followed by an outline of the battle between God and His enemies. Together, the two statements make it clear that the Prophet and the believers have no par in the battle between faith and unfaith, truth and falsehood. This is indeed true even though the Prophet and the believers may think that they have a genuine role to play in this battle. Whatever role they do play, when God so facilitates it for them, is only a part of God's will in His battle against His enemies. They are merely a tool, which God may or may not use. In either case, He does what He wants to do. In both cases, it is He who conducts the battle according to His laws ascertained as He chooses.

This truth gives believers great reassurance in their two conditions of weakness and strength, provided they are sincere in their efforts, placing their trust in God when they fight for His cause. It is not their own power that ensures victory in the battle between truth and falsehood, faith and unfaith. It is God who ensures their victory. Their weakness does not lead to defeat because God's power supports them. God, however, may give respite to the ungrateful and lead them step by step. He determines events according to His will, wisdom, justice and mercy.

At the same time, this truth is bound to strike fear in the hearts of the enemy, whether the believers they are confronting are in a state of weakness or in a state of strength. Those believers are not the actual opponent. It is God who is conducting this war, with His own might. It is God who says to the Prophet to leave such miserable enemies to Him. It is He who leads them on step by step

so that they fall into the fearful trap. Even if this enemy is equipped with all its strength, the same applies, because His power is indeed what sets the trap: *And I will grant indulgence to them. Truly, My cunning is sure.* (68:45) As for the timing of when all this will happen, this is something only God knows. Therefore, no one should be deluded by a false sense of security. Only a transgressor allows such a false feeling to take hold of him.

Nothing is fairer or more merciful than a timely warning that places the outcome before them. God in His limitless glory offers His justice and mercy to His enemies and the enemies of His faith and Messenger. They are offered this warning when they still have the perfect chance to choose for themselves. All matters are laid bare. It is up to them.

How are the signs directed towards Prophet Muhammad?

It is God Almighty who says to His Messenger that he should leave to Him those who deny His revelations. He will settle the matter with them. The Prophet is told to leave God alone with such a person and to go and rest with his fellow believers. God thus reassures His Messenger and warns His enemies. They are then left to consider their position.

Now the Prophet is directed to remain patient in adversity. He should persevere in his efforts to deliver his message, and face all obstacles including peoples twisted minds, the harm they cause him and their denial of the truth. He must remain patient facing all this adversity until God judges as He pleases at the time of His choice. The Prophet is here reminded of the experience of a brother of his who lived in former times. That Prophet was impatient and felt fed up with all the opposition. Had he not been granted God's grace, he would have been left in a state of disgrace.

How are the signs directed towards the Community?

The signs puts this scene before the ungrateful as if it is taking place at the moment of address. Thus, they are challenged to bring in their alleged partners, when this day appears as a reality, unattached in God's knowledge to a particular time. To put it before the addressees in this way gives it a very strong and profound effect. So, on the Day of Judgment, when matters are so dire and people are in great distress, these arrogant people will be asked to prostrate themselves, but they will be unable to do so, either because the time for this has lapsed, or because their bodies are so tense they will not respond. Be that as it may, the image here is one of extreme distress.

At this point, signs 68:34-68:47; 68:51-52 put a simple, uncomplicated argument to them, challenging them, putting to them one question after another, on matters that can have only one answer. It warns them, showing them a fearsome scene of the life to come, and threatens them that, in this present life, they could face a war against God Almighty.

A book that tells them that those who submit to God and the guilty are treated in the same way is indeed a funny sort of book that seeks to please them

and fan their desires. It provides them with whatever rulings they like. Needless to say, such a book has nothing to do with truth, reason, justice or human tradition.

Questions for Classroom Discussion

How would you analyze and evaluate the questions that these Quranic signs ask of the ungrateful?
Will ones who submit to God (*muslims*) be ones who sin?
Do the ungrateful have a Book they study so that they will have whatever they specify?
Are there among Muslims ones who sin?
Is this their own doing?

Questions to Ask Yourself

When you say "muslim", are you implying only ones who submit to God?
What does that mean to you?
If you do this, what will happen to you?
How is this connected to "will ones who submit commit sins"?

Student Assessment

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was struck by how important it is to ask questions as the Quran has done here.
I recognize that the Quran makes the arguments clear about those who refuse to submit to God's will.

Appendix 3. Critical Thinking Strategy

Making Assumptions, Prepositions, Taking for Granted •

What is an assumption? An assumptions is a conjecture, a guess, an opinion, a premise, a hypothesis of a thing that is accepted as true or as certain to happen, without proof. Questions of assumption force you to examine what you are taking for granted. All human thought and action or experiences are based on assumptions. The thought process needs them in order to be able to move forward. The key is for students to be aware of them. When students study Quranic concepts, there is something that they find in the signs that refer to assumptions people make.

Here, the ungrateful assume they can fend off a day. They assume the admonition does not apply to them. For example: *Assumes he that none has power over him? He says: I have caused abundant wealth to perish. Assumes he that none sees him? Make we not two eyes for him and a tongue and two lips and guided him to the two open highways? Yet he rushed not onto the steep ascent. What will cause **you** to recognize what the steep ascent is? It is the liberating of a bondsperson or feeding on a day possessing famine an orphan, possessor of kinship, or a needy, possessor of misery. Again, it had been among those who believed and counseled one another to having patience and counseled one another to clemency.* (90:5-90:17)

Much of what is wrong with human thought can be found in the uncritical or unexamined assumptions that underlie it. For example, students often experience the world in such a way as to assume that they are observing things just as they are, as though they were seeing the world without the filter of a point of view. People they disagree with, of course, they recognize as having a point of view. *Say: Shall We tell you who will be ones who are losers by their actions? It is those whose endeavoring went astray in this present life while they assume that they are doing good by their handiwork.* (18:103-18:104)

One of the key dispositions of critical thinking is the on-going sense that as humans students always think within a perspective, that they virtually never experience things totally and absolutely. There is a connection therefore between thinking so as to be aware of their assumptions and being intellectually humble. *Assumed humanity that they will be left because they say: We believed and they will not be tried?* (29:2)

All reasoning must begin somewhere, must take some things for granted. Any 'defect' in the assumptions or presuppositions with which the reasoning begins is a possible source of problems. Assessing skills of reasoning involves assessing the ability to recognize and articulate their assumptions, again according to the relevant standards. *Assumed those who sought to do evil deeds that We will make them equal with those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality? Are their living and dying equal? How evil is the judgment they give!* (45:21)

A Quranic thinker's assumptions may be stated clearly or unclearly; the

assumptions may be justifiable or unjustifiable, crucial or extraneous, consistent or contradictory. The feedback students receive from teachers on their ability to meet the relevant standards will be a large factor in the improvement of the Quranic student reasoning. *Or assumed you that you would enter the Garden while God knows not those who struggled among you and knows the ones who remain steadfast?* (3:142)

Assumptions usually operate at the subconscious or unconscious level of thought. Assumptions should be justified by sound evidence. *Assumes the human being that We will never gather his bones? Yea! We are ones who have power to shape his fingers again. Nay! The human being wants to act immorally in front of him. He asks: When is this Day of Resurrection? But when their sight will be astonished and the moon will cause the earth to be swallowed and the sun and the moon will be gathered, the human being will say on that Day: Where is a place to run away to?* (75:3-75:10)

It is only by recognizing them that they can evaluate them. Quranic thinkers have a passion for truth and for accepting the strongest reasoning. Thus, they have the intellectual courage to seek out and reject false assumptions of others. They realize that everyone makes some questionable assumptions. They are willing to question, and have others question, even their own most cherished assumptions.

Students should learn to consider alternative assumptions. They base their acceptance or rejection of assumptions on their rational scrutiny of them. They hold questionable assumptions with an appropriate degree of tentativeness. Independent thinkers evaluate assumptions for themselves, and do not simply accept the assumptions of others, even those assumptions made by everyone they know. *Assume they that We hear not their secret thoughts and their conspiring secretly? Yea! Our messengers are near them writing down.* (43:80)

QURANIC CHAPTER 73: REMAINING SIGNS
SIGNS 73:10-73:19

Madinah (73:10)
Madinah (73:11)
Makkah: *Truly, with Us are shackles and hellfire* (73:12)
and food which sticks in the throat
and chokes and a painful punishment. (73:13)
On a Day when the earth will quake and the mountains,
and the mountains will become
a poured forth heap of sand. (73:14)
Truly, We sent you a Messenger, one who bears witness to you,
as We sent to Pharaoh a Messenger. (73:15)
But Pharaoh rebelled against the Messenger
so We took him a taking remorselessly. (73:16)
How will you fend off a day if you were ungrateful,

that will make the children gray haired? (73:17)
The heaven will be that which is split apart from it.
His promise had been one that is accomplished. (73:18)
Truly, this is a Reminder;
so let whoever willed take himself a way to his Lord. (73:19)

COMMENTARY°

RHYTHM OF THE SIGNS

The first half of the chapter maintains the same rhythm, and almost the same rhyme, followed by a long *a* throughout. It gives the chapter a relaxed but courtly beat, one that suits its majestic command, the seriousness of the duty and the successive and momentous images the chapter portrays. These include the weighty message and the frightening warning: (73:11-73:13)

THE UNGRATEFUL

Having given this scary image, the chapter addresses the ungrateful who enjoy a life of luxury, reminding them of a great tyrant, Pharaoh, and how God swept him away. (73:15-73:16) The terrible end suffered by Pharaoh is given in such a brief word that it strikes even more fear into our hearts, and this after God swearing an oath that depicts the earth shaking and the mountains flattened on the Day.

All these: (73:12-73:13) are fitting requitals for those who enjoy a life of comfort in this world but who continue to deny the divine message. They do not appreciate what they are given; nor do they give due thanks for the comforts they enjoy.

An image of that day and the fear it spreads is then drawn: (73:14) The feeling of fear transcends all people to spread over the whole earth: it thus shudders and crashes, with the great mountains crumbling into heaps of sand. How, then, will humans react?

There are also the awesome images drawn from the great universe and from the depths of the human soul: (73:17-73:18).

The chapter portrays these images before the addressees as if they are taking place now. It then confirms this most emphatically: (73:18) It is happening, no doubt. Whatever God wills is certain to be done.

Now the chapter gives their hearts a gentle touch so that they may remember and choose the road to safety: (73:19) The way to God is safer and easier to traverse. It spares people such a terrible outcome.

SUMMARY OF QURANIC SIGNS 73:10-73:19

WHO IS GOD, THE LORD?

The punishment is with God. God sent a Messenger as He had sent a Messenger to Pharaoh who Pharaoh denied him and was seized by God. All these:

Truly, with Us are shackles and hellfire and food which sticks in the throat and chokes and a painful punishment (73:12-73:13) are fitting requitals for those who enjoy a life of comfort in this world but who continue to deny the divine message. They do not appreciate what they are given; nor do they give due thanks for the comforts they enjoy. God has what they deserve: Heavy fetters, a blazing fire, food that is so hard to swallow and a painful suffering on a day that fills everyone with fear.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

Have patience (Muhammad) with what they say and abandon them.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

Pharaoh rebelled against God's Messenger. The signs carrying these warnings strike the ungrateful hard. They shake them violently, leaving them in great fear. At the same time, they provide strengthening reassurance to the small group of the Prophet's followers. They feel that God is with them, punishing their enemies. It is only but a short while and the appointed time will arrive. The matter will then be settled. God will take His enemies, who are their enemies, and put them to the fate they deserve. God does not abandon the believers to His enemies, even though He may give His enemies respite for a while.

These are two images of punishment, one in this life and one in the hereafter. How do those ungrateful think they will be saved from such punishment? This is an image of a fearful event that leaves the sky rent asunder, after the earth and the mountains have crumbled into sand. It turns children's hair grey. The images of this terrifying event are drawn from a silent landscape as well as a living humanity. (73:17-18).

QUESTIONS FOR CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

What are the ungrateful assuming here?
What could we assume instead?
Is this always the case?
Why do you think the assumption holds here?

Ask students questions that probe reasons, evidence and causes.
Lead students to support their arguments.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

What are my reasons for saying that these are the assumptions of the ungrateful?
What other information do I need to know?
Is there good evidence for believing that?
What do I think the cause is?

Student Assessment

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I am able to understand the assumption of the ungrateful that there will be no accounting for their deeds.

I see that the ungrateful think that the admonition from God is but an assumption on the part of those who believe.

APPENDIX 4. CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY UTILIZING CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS, PRINCIPLES, MODELS AND VOCABULARY •

Quranic thinking offers you concepts and principles that help you analyze, assess and improve your thinking when you better understand the meanings of the Quranic signs. What is a concept? A concept is an idea or thought, especially a generalized idea of a thing or of a class of things. The Quranic text expresses clusters of concepts or ideas. It is these concepts that it uses that you need to learn to identify, contrast them with other of its concepts and clarify what they mean and what you will include and exclude because of them. Quranic clusters of concepts include, for example, living-creation; false-deity concept; sacred text concept. The latter, sacred text concept includes four concepts: The Quran itself, the Gospel, the Torah (the first five books of the Bible also known as the Pentateuch), and the Psalms. What are principles? Principles express the relationship between concepts. A basic Quranic principle is the Oneness of God (*tawhid*). A second principle is submission to the Will of God. Those who, by choice, submit to the Will of God are *muslims*. Quranic thinkers begin developing their reasoning or discernment faculty by understanding what it means to utilize concepts, definitions, principles, models and vocabulary.

QURANIC CHAPTER 74: REMAINING SIGNS SIGNS 74:6-74:31

Makkah: *And show grace*
not to acquire more. (74:6)
And for your Lord, then have patience. (74:7)
Then, when the horn is sounded, (74:8)
truly, that Day will be a difficult day, (74:9)
and not easy for the ones who are ungrateful. (74:10)
Leave Me alone with him
whom I created (74:11)
I have assigned to him the spreading out of wealth (74:12)
and children as ones who bear witness (74:13)
And I have made affairs smooth for him, a making smooth (74:14)
Moreover, he is desirous that I increase it. (74:15)
No indeed. He has been stubborn about Our Signs. (74:16)
I will constrain him with a hard ascent. (74:17)
Truly he deliberated and ordained (74:18)
Perdition ot Him! How he ordained! (74:19)
Moreover, perdition to him! How he ordained! (74:20)
Moreover, he looked on, (74:21)
Moreover, he frowned and scowled. (74:22)
Moreover, he drew back and grew arrogant (74:23)
and he said: This is nothing

but fabricated from old sorcery. (74:24)
This is nothing but the saying of a mortal. (74:25)
I will scorch him in Saqar. (74:26)
*And how will **you** recognize what Saqar is?* (74:27)
It forsakes not nor causes anything to remain. (74:28)
scorching the mortal. (74:29)
Over it there are nineteen. (74:30)
We have assigned none but angels to be wardens of the Fire
and We have made the amount of them not
but as a test for those who were ungrateful.
So those who were given the Book are reassured
and those who have believed, add to their belief.
And will not doubt those who were given the Book
and the ones who believe.
And say to those who in their hearts is a sickness
and the ones who are ungrateful:
What had God wanted by this example?
Thus, God causes to go astray whom He wills,
and He guides whom He wills.
*And none knows the armies of **your** Lord but He.*
And it is not other than a reminder for the mortals. (74:31)

COMMENTARY°

When this divine directive has been given to the noble Prophet, the chapter outlines the terms of the warning to be given. This is delivered in a way that alerts attention to the hard day they are warned about: *Then, when the horn is sounded, truly, that Day will be a difficult day, and not easy for the ones who are ungrateful.* (74:8-74:10)

The Quranic message begins with a fearsome threat: *Leave Me alone with whom I created.* (74:11) The address is made to Muhammad. He is told to leave this person to God. He gave this person plentiful wealth, and able sons who attend to his needs and give him authority and protection. He facilitated life for him. Yet: *Again, he is desirous that I increase it.* (74:15) He is neither content nor grateful.

At this point he is strongly repudiated for his greed. He has not shown any gratitude to God for what He has given him. The repudiating word is decisive. *No indeed; he had been stubborn about Our signs.* (74:16) This repudiation of the human being and his attitude is followed by a threat to replace his ease with hardship. *I will constrain him with a hard ascent.* (74:17)

The chapter draws a sarcastic caricature of this person with grim features, frowning, thinking hard and trying to find fault with the Quran. He is obsessed with trying to find an apt and negative description to label the Quran with. *Truly, he deliberated and calculated.*

Then, perdition to him! How he calculated! Again, perdition to him! How he calculated! Again, he looked on and, again, he frowned and scowled. Again, he drew back and grew arrogant. And he said: This is nothing but fabricated old sorcery. This is nothing but the saying of a mortal. (74:18-74:25)

The image we are given here takes us one glimpse at a time, step by step, and movement by movement. It is like watching a paintbrush at work, rather than hearing words giving a meaning. More than that, it is like a scene in a film, consisting of many frames. One frame shows him thinking and scheming. This is coupled with an invocation: Damn him! and a derisive remark: *How he ordained*! Both invocation and derisive remark are repeated to heighten the effect. Another frame shows him looking here and there, in affected seriousness, again inviting ridicule. The next frame shows him frowning, and another shows his features grim. In both, the impression is that he is trying to concentrate, but in a laughable way. Yet, after all this labor, he comes up with nothing. He closes his eyes to the light and turns away from the truth. All he can say is that it is sorcery. *And he said: This is nothing but fabricated old sorcery. This is nothing but the saying of a mortal.* (74:24-25)

Once the picture is hung in place and this miserable creature is seen by all there then comes a frightening warning. *I will scorch him in Saqar.* (74:26) The warning is made even stronger by the enigmatic air that surrounds the fire. *And how will you recognize what Saqar is?* (74:27) It is too great to be imagined! Yet another description is added to make it even more terrifying. *It forsakes not nor causes anything to remain.* (74:28) It swallows everything, obliterating whoever or whatever is cast into it, leaving no trace. Moreover, it presents itself before people *scorching the mortal.* (74:29) This echoes the sign in an earlier chapter: *Calling whoever drew back and turned away.* (70:17) It thus shows itself, deliberately striking fear into those who are destined to suffer its torment. Guards stand there: *Over it there are nineteen.* (74:30) We do not know if the number refers to individual angels who are stern and mighty or whether it refers to rows or types of angels. This is merely a piece of information to which more will be added in the chapter.

The sign (74:31) begins by mentioning the nature of the nineteen guards whose number the ungrateful joked about: *But whoever was looking beyond that, those, they are ones who turn away.* (74:31) They belong to that species of creature the nature and strength of which are known only to God Almighty. He mentions elsewhere in the Quran that the angels never disobey God in whatever He commands them and always do what they are bidden to do: *O those who believed! Protect yourselves and your people from a fire whose fuel is humanity and*

rocks over which are angels, harsh, severe who rebel not against whatever God commanded them and they accomplish what they are commanded. (66:6) This statement makes it clear that they always obey God's orders and that they have the power to do whatever He bids them.

It is the ungrateful: *But whoever was looking beyond that, those, they are ones who turn away* (74:31) that start arguing when the number is mentioned, because they cannot distinguish when an argument is out of place.

Why this, and why that! The answer is that because the Creator who holds sway over all things has willed it so, and His will is always done! This is the final answer in such matters.

Both groups will find in the number of the guards of hell what will give some of them more certainty and give others firmer faith. *We assigned none but angels to be wardens of the Fire and We made the amount of them not but as a test for those who were ungrateful. So those who were given the Book are reassured and those who believed, add to their belief. And will not doubt those who were given the Book and the ones who believe. And say to those who in their hearts is a sickness and the ones who are ungrateful: What had God wanted by this example? Thus, God causes to go astray whom He wills, and He guides whom He wills. And none knows the armies of your Lord but He. And it is not other than a reminder for the mortals.*(74:31)

It is said that this person is al-Walid ibn al-Mughayrah, to whom 74:11-74:31 refer. There are many reports that speak of al-Walid's repeated scheming against Muhammad and his opposition to the Quranic message, trying to turn people away from it. It is also reported that the signs in the present chapter refer to al-Akhnas ibn Shariq, another of Muhammad's determined opponents. The present denunciation of Muhammad, whether he was al-Walid or al-Akhnas, and the stern warnings given in the other chapter, suffice as evidence of this person's wicked role in the fight against Muhammad and the Quranic message. They also indicate his evil intentions and that he was devoid of all goodness.

So these men began to spread this report about the Messenger with everyone they met so that the Arabs went away from that fair knowing about the Messenger, and he was talked about in the whole of Arabia. When Abu Talib feared that the multitude would overwhelm him with his family he composed an ode, in which he claimed protection in the sanctuary of Makkah and by his position therein. He showed his affection for the nobles of his people while, nevertheless, he told them and others in his poetry that he was not going to give up the Messenger or surrender him on any account whatever, but he would die in his defense.

The believers received God's words with the sort of acceptance worthy of one who trusts his Lord and shows the sort of manners a servant should have. They neither doubted this piece of news nor questioned it. The ungrateful, on the other hand, received it all with hearts devoid of faith or seriousness. They had no reverence of God. Therefore, they made sarcastic comments, making the number, i.e. the nineteen, the subject of endless jokes.

One of them said: Will not each of you be sufficient to overcome one of them? Another said: You take care of two of these and I will take care of the rest. You will have nothing to worry about from them.

SUMMARY OF QURANIC SIGNS 74:6-74:31

WHO IS GOD, THE LORD?

Since God has assigned angels the task of guarding hell, then they have been given the power to undertake this task and fulfill it as it should be done. Thus, there is no way that human beings can fight with them or subdue them. Such talk only betrays the crude ignorance of the ungrateful of the nature of God's creation and how He conducts affairs. Since this question belongs to the realm beyond, and humanity has no knowledge of it, then whatever God says about it should be accepted without argument. It should also be understood that mentioning this fact only, without adding further details, is the appropriate and beneficial way. To argue about it is futile, because argument can only be based on knowledge that does not fit with the information to hand. Their exact number, whatever it signifies, is determined by the One who coordinates everything in the unseen and creates everything according to a specific measure. This number is like any other, and a person who wants to argue will make the same objection to any other number. Why are the heavens seven? Why was the human being created from dried clay, like pottery while the jinn were created from raging flames of fire, as mentioned in Chapter 55? Why does pregnancy last nine months? Why do tortoises live for centuries?

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET?

God says to Muhammad to leave the ungrateful to Him, for He will battle with him.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The sounding of the trumpet is here expressed in a stronger way than normally used in other chapters. In its Arabic expression, it gives a feeling of a sound that is sharper to the ear, almost beating on it. Therefore, the day will be hard for the ungrateful. Its hardship is emphasized by negating all traces of ease. It is hard from start to finish, without any respite. No details are given of this hardship; it is left in general terms to impart a feeling of distress and choking. It behooves those ungratefuls, then, to heed the warning before the trumpet is sounded, ushering in this very hard day.

This general warning gives way to the case of a particular individual who seems to have played a leading role in rejecting the divine message and plotting against it. The chapter issues a crushing warning, painting an ugly image of him that invites derision. This is particularly so when his unpleasant features appear lifelike before our eyes.

He created him alone, without anything in which he now takes pride, such as wealth, children, comforts and luxuries. Yet he still seeks to possess more. He deliberately set himself against all pointers to the truth and indicators of the way to true faith. He opposed the divine message and the Messenger preaching it, prevented others from listening to it and spread false rumors about it.

Questions for Classroom Discussion

In addition to placing an emphasis on questions, have students:

Summarize or put into their own words what the Quran has said.
Elaborate on what it has said.
Relate the issue or content to their own knowledge and experience.
Give examples to clarify or support what they have said.
Make connections between related concepts.
State the question at issue.
Describe to what extent their point of view differs.

Questions to Ask Students

What is a Quranic sentence?
How is it different from a group of words?
What is a Quranic section (*ruku*)?
How is it different from a group of Quranic sentences?
What are Quranic words for? What do they do? How?

Student Assessment

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I summarized the Quranic signs in my own words.
I was able to elaborate on what I understood from the signs.
I related the concept to my own experience.

CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY • EXPLORING IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

Questions of implication force us to follow out where our thinking is going. Implications follow from our thoughts. Consequences follow from our actions. The ability to reason well is measured in part by an ability to understand and enunciate the implications and, then, the consequences of the reasoning. For example: I think this or that. What does this thought imply? What would be the consequences if I were to act upon that thought? When students spell out the implications of their reasoning: Have they succeeded in identifying significant and realistic implications? Have they confined themselves to unimportant and unrealistic ones? Have they enunciated the implications of their views clearly and precisely enough to permit their thinking to be evaluated by the validity of those implications? Can they trace the implications and consequences that come from their reasoning?

Quranic thinkers learn to recognize the implications of Quranic signs that are made and what follows from them. In this way they develop a more complete understanding of the meaning of a sign. Quranic thinkers recognize that if they are to accept the statement in a Quranic sign, they also have to accept its implications. There is no limit to the extent of this process. When taking beliefs into consideration, beliefs that relate to actions or behavior, they consider the consequences of acting on those beliefs.

QURANIC CHAPTER 74: REMAINING SIGNS

SIGNS 74:32-74:56

Makkah: *No indeed! By the moon* (74:32)
and the night when it drew back (74:33)
and polished is the morning. (74:34)
Truly, it is one of the greatest of all things (74:35)
as a warner to the mortals, (74:36)
to whomever willed among you
that he go forward or remain behind. (74:37)
Every soul is a pledge for what it earned (74:38)
but the Companions of the Right (74:39)
will be in Gardens and will demand of one another (74:40)
about the ones who sin: (74:41)
What thrust you into Saqar? (74:42)
They would say: We be not among
the ones who formally pray (74:43)
and we were not those who feed the needy. (74:44)
And we had been ones who engage in idle talk along with
the ones who engage in idle talk. (74:45)
And we had been denying the Day of Judgment (74:46)
until the certainty of the Hour approached us. (74:47)

Then, intercession will not profit them
from the ones who are intercessors. (74:48)
Then, what is the matter with them
that they are ones who turn aside
from the admonition, (74:49)
as though they had been frightened donkeys (74:50)
that ran away from a lion? (74:51)
Nay! Every man among them wants
to be given unrolled scrolls. (74:52)
No indeed! Nay! They fear not the world to come. (74:53)
No indeed! Truly, it is an admonition. (74:54)
So let whoever willed, remember it. (74:55)
But they will not remember unless God wills.
He is Worthy of God-consciousness
and He is Worthy of granting The Forgiveness. (74:56)

Commentary°

A Look at the Universe

The chapter now relates the truths of the life to come, the scorching fire of hell and Gods forces to various aspects of His fine creation in the unseen, which people often overlook because of long familiarity. Yet these are evident proofs of God s limitless power of creation and His perfect design of the unseen: *No indeed! By the moon and the night when it drew back and polished is the morning. Truly, it is one of the greatest of all things as a warner to the mortals, to whomever willed among you that he go forward or remain behind. Every soul is a pledge for what it earned.* (74:32-74:36)

God Almighty swears by these great universal truths in order to alert those who are oblivious to their greatness and the message they impart. He swears that the scorching fire, or its guards, or the hereafter and its events, is one of the great wonders that serve as a warning to humanity of the impending danger ahead: *Truly, it is one of the greatest of all things as a warner to the mortals, to whomever willed among you that he go forward or remain behind.* (74:35-74:36) The very oath, its contents and subject matter are all like hammers striking hard at peoples hearts. This is in perfect harmony with the sounding of the trumpet mentioned earlier, and with the opening of the chapter as it addresses Muhammad and bids him to arise and warn. The whole atmosphere is one of hard hitting, warning of an impending danger.

Individual Responsibility

The chapter now declares that every soul bears responsibility for itself, leaving everyone to choose for themselves. It also states that

each soul will have to account for its choices and be judged according to its deeds: *Truly, it is one of the greatest of all things as a warner to the mortals, to whomever willed among you that he go forward or remain behind. Every soul is a pledge for what it earned.* (74:35-74:38)

It is further declared, however, that an exception is made in the case of the believers who are referred to here as the ones on the Right Hand. These are united. They are also given the right to ask the guilty about what has perpetrated their fate. (74:39-74:47)

The believers, whom they looked down upon in this world, stand in a position of dignity, asking them as if they are put in a position of authority: *What thrust you into Saqar?* (74:42) It also touches the hearts of the believers who used to be at the receiving end of much hardship from those same guilty ones.

The long confession by the guilty gives details of the many wrongs they have perpetrated, and for which they are led to the scorching fire. They humbly admit to these in front of the believers. *They would say: We be not among the ones who formally pray.* (74:43) This is a reference to faith altogether, rather than to the act of prayer. It highlights the great importance of prayer in the Quranic faith, presenting it as a symbol and proof of faith.

This comes next to denying the faith. *And we were not those who feed the needy.* (74:44) It is an act of worship in respect of His creatures, following worship dedicated to Him only.

This: *We had been ones who engage in idle talk along with the ones who engage in idle talk.* (74:45) describes how they took faith lightly and treated it carelessly, in jest, when it was the most important matter in human life.

This: *We had been denying the Day of Judgment* (74:46) is the core guilt. A person who denies the Day of Judgment will have no proper standard by which to evaluate things.

The guilty admit that they continued in that situation, unwilling to pray, being uncharitable to the needy, indulging in vain talk and denying the Day of Judgment until there came upon us that which is certain? *Until the certainty of the Hour approached us.* (74:47) What came upon them is death, which ends all doubt, bringing the final say and leaving no room for regret, repentance or the mending of ones ways.

The chapter comments on their abject humiliation by raising no hope of any change in their status: *Then, intercession will not profit them from the ones who are intercessors.* (74:48) The whole thing is settled. The end of the guilty has been determined. There is no one to intercede on their behalf anyway. Assuming that such intercessors are there and willing, which is not the case, their pleas will be of no benefit to the guilty.

WHO HEEDS THE REMINDER?

The chapter now puts them back in this life, where they have the chance to do something before facing such an abject outcome. Yet they turn away, fleeing from the guidance that would bring them only what is good. The means of salvation are shown to them, but they run away from them. Therefore, the chapter draws a sarcastic image of their situation: *Then, what is the matter with them that they are ones who turn aside from the admonition, as though they had been frightened donkeys that ran away from a lion?* (74:49-74:51)

Such is their external condition. The chapter, however, describes their inner feelings as well: *Nay! Every man among them wants to be given unrolled scrolls.* (74:52) It is, then, a question of envy. They begrudge Muhammad for God having given him this exceptional favor. Each one of them is so keen to attain the same status and to be given scriptures to announce to humanity. This must be a reference to their elders who felt hurt that they were bypassed when divine revelations were granted to Muhammad.

The chapter continues its presentation of their inner feelings. As it censures their envy, which lacks sound basis, the chapter now gives another reason for the continued denial of the truth by the ungrateful and their rejection of the message: *No indeed! Nay! They fear not the world to come.* (74:53) It is indeed their lack of fear of what may happen in the life to come that leads to their heedless attitude to reminders. It makes them react illogically to the divine message. Had they genuinely felt the truth of the hereafter they would have had a totally different reaction.

The chapter repudiates their attitude once more, as it puts its final word to them, leaving them to choose for themselves what they may: *No indeed! Truly, it is an admonition. So let whoever willed, remember it.* (74:54-74:55) This Quran to which they refuse to listen, and from which they turn away like frightened asses, is a reminder highlighting the truth. Everyone adopts the attitude they want towards it. Whoever is willing to be reminded will have the reminder. Others choose their own way. The outcome is either heaven and the dignity it imparts or hell and the humiliation it involves. It all depends on one's own choice.

The chapter concludes with a restatement of God's free will which ultimately determines all affairs. This is the truth the Quran is keen to state whenever an occasion arises in order to give the believers the correct concept concerning His will, and its being absolutely free and universally applicable. *But they will not remember unless God wills. He is Worthy of God-consciousness and He is Worthy of granting The Forgiveness.* (74:56)

Their will cannot be on a collision course with God's will. *But they will not remember unless God wills. He is Worthy of God-con-*

sciousness and He is Worthy of granting The Forgiveness. (74:56) Indeed, they cannot move in any direction without the operation of God's will that so enables them to move. God is the Lord to be feared by His servants. Therefore, they are required to demonstrate this. He is also the Lord of forgiveness who bestows this on His servants by His will. To fear God is to deserve forgiveness, and God is the Lord of both.

The chapter concludes with this humbly felt glorification of God. It leaves us looking up to God. It leaves us hoping that He will guide us to His remembrance, so that we will always fear Him and that He will then grant us forgiveness.

SUMMARY OF QURANIC SIGNS

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

All of us are responsible for ourselves, choosing their own positions, going ahead or lagging behind, achieving an honorable status or bringing humiliation upon themselves. Thus, every soul is tied to what it does and the action it takes. God has shown all people the way that leads to Him so that they can take that way with open eyes. As this declaration of individual responsibility is made against the backdrop of inspiring universal scenes, as well as the scene of the scorching fire that spares nothing, it has its profound effect.

The Companions of the Right Hand will be in Gardens where they ask one another about the reason why some were thrust into Saqar. The ones in Saqar explain that it is because they did not formally pray nor did they feed the needy. They engaged in idle talk and denied the Day of Judgment until it was too late and the Day approached them. They are ones who turn aside from the admonition, who fear not the world to come. Those who remember it willed to do so, but they could not have willed to do so unless God, who is worthy of God-consciousness (*taqwa*), so willed.

QUESTIONS FOR CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

Ask questions that probe implications and consequences.

When you say that the ungrateful did not feed the poor, are you implying that that is one of the reasons they are in Saqar?

Is being in Saqar the consequence of what their actions implied?

If someone does not feed the needy and engages in idle talk, what will be the consequences according to these Quranic signs?

How is that connected to the question: What is one of the greatest of all things that is a warner to mortals?

How does that bear on those who refuse to adhere to the admonition?

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

If people take seriously what these Quranic signs are saying, some important implications are... ?

What consequences are likely to follow if people take these Quranic

signs seriously?
Assess the implications of their analysis.
What did they learn about themselves?
What would they do differently if they could re-live the situation?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I understand the implications of the oaths at the beginning of this Quranic section is that the Quran is a warner.
The implication of these Quranic signs for those who do not offer formal prayer, who do not feed the needy, who engage in the talk, who deny the Day of Judgment implies certain consequences as explained by the Quranic signs regarding Saqar.

Appendix 5: Correlation of the Original Chapters with Chapters in Chronological Order

1 = 96
2 = 68
3 = 73
4 = 74
5 = 1
6 = 111
7 = 81
8 = 87
9 = 92
10 = 89
11 = 93
12 = 94
13 = 103
14 = 100
15 = 108
16 = 102
17 = 107
18 = 109
19 = 105
20 = 113
21 = 114
22 = 112
23 = 53
24 = 80
25 = 97
26 = 91
27 = 85
28 =95
29 = 106
30 = 101
31 = 75
32 = 104
33 = 77
34 = 50
35 = 90
36 = 86
37 = 54
38 = 38
39 = 7
40 = 72
41 = 36
42 = 25
43 = 35
44 = 19
45 = 20
46 = 56
47 = 26
48 = 27
49 = 28
50 = 17
51 = 10
52 = 11
53 = 12
54 = 15
55 = 6
56 = 37
57 = 31
57 = 34
59 = 39
60 = 40
61 = 41
62 = 42
63 = 43
64 = 44
65 = 45
66 = 46
67 = 51
68 = 88
69 = 18
70 = 16
71 = 71
72 = 14
73 = 21
74 = 23
75 = 32
76 = 52
77 = 67
78 = 69
79 = 70
80 = 78
81 = 79
82 = 82
83 = 84
84 = 30
85 = 29
86 = 83
87 = 2
88 = 8
89 = 3
90 = 33
91 = 60
92 = 4
93 = 99
94 = 57
95 = 47
96 = 13
97 = 55
98 = 76
99 = 65
100 = 78
101 = 59
102 = 24
103 = 22
104 = 63
105 = 58
106 = 49
107 = 66
108 = 64
109 = 61
110 = 62
111 = 48
112 = 5
113 = 9
114 = 110

NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION

1. The rough equation that earlier Muslim scholars drew between the Islamic and Western conceptions of reason tended to be oblivious of the categories of reason and the Western critique of reason that divided it into "instrumental reason, critical reason, functional reason, abstract reason, imperialist reason, decentering reason" and the like. For details see Abdelwahab M. Elmessiri, "Features of the New Islamic Discourse," a Cairo conference paper, 1997: http:// www.21stcenturytrust.org/messiri.doc.

2. Some commentators have distinguished a total of 30 expressions that revolve around thinking over the *ayat*. See Abu Bakr al-Razi, *Tafsir al-Kabir* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1985), II, 222f.

3. Cf Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-'Ilm fi'l-Quran al-Karim* (Cairo: Maktaba Wahba, 1416/1996), 36.

4. Al-Isfahani, *Mufradat Alfaz al-Qur'an*, under "*Fikr*".

5. Cf., Karim Douglas Crow, "Islam and Reason" in *Al-Shajarah*, vol. 8, (2003),120-1.

6. Abbas Mahmud, "al-Agqad, Al-Tafkir Faridah Islamiyyah" (Thinking is an Islamic Obligation) quoted in Jamal Badi and Mustapha Tajdin, *Creative Thinking: An Islamic Perspective*, 2nd edn. (Kuala Lumpur: International Islamic University Malaysia, 2005), 6.

7. Cf. al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-'Ilm*, 41-45 quoting ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's *Miftah Dar al-Sa'ada*, and 'Agqad's book entitled *al-Tafkir Faridah Islamiyya* (Beirut: al-Matba'a al-'Asriyya, 1992).

8. Cf. al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-Ilm*, 200.

9. Cf .Ibid., 202.

10. Al-Raghib al-Isfahani, *Mufradat Alfaz al-Quran* (Beirut: Dar al-Shamiyya, 1383/1964), 249.

11. Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i, *al-Mizan fi-Tafsir al-Quran* (Beirut: al-Mu'assasa al-'Alami, 1383/1964) II, 395.

12. Ala uddin al-Mattagi al-Hindi, *Kanz al-Ummah fi Sunan al-Aqwal wa'l-Af'al* (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risalah, 1383/1981), hadith no. 5873.

13. Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali, *Risalat al-Radd 'ala al-Laduniyya*, ed. 'Abd Allah Riyad Mustafa, (Damascus: Dar al-Hikma, 1986), 241.

14. CE Ahmad Fu'ad al-Ahwani, *al-Tarbiyah fi'l-Islam* (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif bi-Misr, 1968), 227-228.

15. Cf. Aziz al-Azmeh, *Arabic Thought and Islamic Societies* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 109.

16. Cf. Diane F. Halpern, *Thought and Knowledge: An Introduction to Critical Thinking* (Mahwah: New Jersey, Lawrence Erlbaum and Associates, 1996), 21.

17. Cf. Ibrahim B. Syed, "Critical Thinking" as online at http://www.lrfi. org/articles/articles_101_150/critical_thinking.htm.

(18. Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Lahore: Shah Muhammad Ashraf, reprint 1982), 127.

19. Malik Bin Nabi, *Intaj al-Mustashriqin* (Cairo: Maktabah 'Amir, 1990), 34.

20. Iqbal, op. cit., 139.

21. See for details Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, *What's Right with Islam is What's Right with America* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2004), 4-5.

22. Georg W. H. Hegel, *Philosophy of History* (New York: Dove Books, 1956), 109.

23. Louay Safi, "The Creative Mission of the Muslim Minorities in the West: Synthesizing the Ethos of Islam and modernity," a conference paper presented at Westminster University, London, England February 21, 2004: http://insight.org/articles/Current/MuslimMinorities.htm.

24. Cf., M.H. Kamali, "Islam, Rationality and Science," in Islam and Science, vol. 1, no. 2 (2003), 126f, see also Mehdi Golshani, "Philosophy of Science from the Qur'anic Perspective," in *Towards Islamisation of Disciplines* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1989), 73f.

25. Cf. Ishfaq Ahmad, "Research and Development Culture in the Islamic World: Past and Present Problems and Future Directions," in Abu Bakr Abdul Majeed et al. (eds.) *New Knowledge, Research and Development in the Muslim World* (Kuala Lumpur: Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia, 2004), 14-15.

26. See for a discussion Oliver Leaman, "Institutionalising Research and Development Culture in the Islamic and Non-Islamic World: A Comparative Perspective," in Abu Bakr Majeed, (ed.) *New Knowledge*, 50-51.

27. Malik bin Nabi, *Intaj al-Mustashriqin*, 26.

28. See for details Mohammad Hashim Kamali, "Issues in the Understanding of Jihad and Ijtihad" in *Islamic Studies* 41 (2002), 623 ff.

29. There is a chapter on *ijtihad* in M. H. Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1991, 3rd edn. 2003). See also my article "Issues in the Understanding of Jihad and Ijtihad" in *Islamic Studies*, 41 (2002), 617-635; and "Issues in the Legal Theory and Usul and Prospects for Reform" in *Islamic Studies*, 40 (2001), 1-21.

30. Sergio Moravia. *The Enigma of the Mind: The Mind-Body Problem in Contemporary Thought*, tr. S. Staton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. First published in Rome, 1986), 4-5.

31. See for example, Howard Gardner, *Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligence for the 21st Century* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

32. See for details Roger Garudy, "The Balance Sheet of Western Philosophy in this Century" in *Towards Islamisation of Disciplines* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1989), 399f.

33. Mehdi Golshani, "From Knowledge to Wisdom: A Qur'anic Perspective," in *Islamic Studies*, 44 (2005), 13.

34. Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Fiqh al-Awlawiyyat*, 68.

35. Cf., Al-Ahwani, *al-Tarbiyah fi'l-Islam*, 189.

36. Mohammad Hashim Kamali is Professor of Islamic Law and jurisprudence at the International Islamic University Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur. "Reading the Signs," Center for Islam and Science. Gale Group, 2006.

NOTES TO THE TEXT

1. As described by a traveler: The [area] had a dreary aspect, not a single green spot being visible. Barren, black and grey hills and white sandy valleys, were the only objects in sight. *Burkhardt's Travels*, p 176; 35:28.

2. Ibn Ishaq, *Life of Muhammad*, pp 104-106; 111.

3. *Fatul Bari* 1/27 12/360.

4. Ibn Hisham, Note 156.

5. Ibn Ishaq, *Life of Muhammad*, p 324.

6. Ibn Hisham, Note 156.

7. Ibn Hisham, Note 156.

8. When the Quranic message addresses Muhammad specifically, it uses the second person singular pronoun, thee or thou, in Arabic. Throughout this series of *Critical Thinking Textbooks*, the word **"you"** appears in bold as the translation so that the reader knows that the original Arabic was the second person singular pronoun and not the word "you" which is the second person plural pronoun. The reason is because "you" is more common in the English language today and using the pronouns thee or thou In English requires a different verb tense. This becomes cumbersome in English. However, it is important to note that when Thou or Thee is used in the translation of the Quranic message referring to God, when we replace them with **"You"** in bold, we are referring to God in the plural. Having plural gods is the only sin which is not forgiven in the Quranic message. So, while it is done in the English translation in this series with the best of intentions and in no way suggests that God is plural, the reader should note this point when studying the Quran.

9. This was the first complete chapter revealed. Sayyid Abd al-Ala Mawdudi, Vol. 1, *Towards Understanding the Quran*, p 33.

10. Ibn Ishaq, *Life of Muhammad,* pp 112-114.

11. Ibn Ishaq, *Life of Muhammad,* p 114.

12. *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, Vol. 10, pp 625-627.

13. W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Makkah.* p 88 ff.

14. See end of Madinah chapers in *Book Year 24.*

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My gratitude also goes to the Center for Critical Thinking and, particularly, the online work done in youtube videos and other works by the educator-founders-members of the Critical Thinking Community, namely, the late Dr. Richard Paul and his wife and constant collaborator, Dr. Linda Elder. All indications of • throughout the text refers to quotes or paraphrases from their excellent work as part of the Critical Thinking Community, www.criticalthinking.org. My attempt has been for all the quotes and paraphrases used here to follow fair copyright use.

Whereas Drs. Paul and Elder may not have used their work in religious educational settings, due to the separation of church and state in the educating of American students, learning from their works it became clear that their teachings can help Muslim students, as well, if their method is presented through the content of the Quran. If Muslim students come to understand that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking, that is, discernment (*furqan*), HOW to think, they will be armed with the intellectual skills they need to confront Islamic extremism.

One of the main scholars that Islamic extremists use in their propaganda is Seyyed Qutb. In order to further arm Muslim students for any confrontation they may have with Islamic extremists who would quote that their ideas come from Seyyed Qutb, I have used his Quranic commentary, *In the Shade of the Quran*, in Chapter I of this work. Students will learn how, contrary to what they may be told or taught, in many cases, Seyyed Qutb's commentary (indicated by °) speaks of and describes the way that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking and Islamic extremists cannot say that I have left out their scholars.

Last, but certainly not least, I wish to thank Kazi Publications and its founder, Liaquat Ali, for his constant support and encouragement to forge new areas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqli*) will be passed to young students as they learn of a Muslim world deeply entrenched in Islamic narrative sciences (*al-naqli*)

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PREFACE

EXPLANATION OF THE CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STUDIES TEXTBOOK SERIES

There are thirty books in this series. Books entitled *Book Year 1* to *Book Year 24* consist of one book for each year of the revelation. The chapters' or sections' signs (*ayat*) are presented according to the 558 *ruku* or sections of the 114 chapters of the Quran. They each include the relevant chapter (*surah*) or chapters (when they are short) or sections, *ruku* (when there are multiple sections in a particular chapter) in chronological order. The chapters are numbered according to the chronological order of the Quranic chapters provided by al-Azhar University as the officially accepted order of revelation. Each section (*ruku*) is followed by a commentary by one of the well-known commentators.

Book Year 2, the present volume, covers Muharram 1-Dhu al-Hijja 29, 12 BH/ca. November 24, 610 CE-November 12, 611 CE.

Books 25-28 are devoted to the Quranic stories of all other Prophets and Messengers in order of their dates. *Book 25: Adam, Cain and Abel, Enoch (Idris), Noah, Hud and the People of Aad; Saleh and the People of Thamud; Book 26: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Jacob (Israel), Joseph and Job; Book 27: Moses, Aaron, Children of Jacob (Israel), Jethro (Shuayb), Joshua, Khidr and Samuel; Book 28: David, Solomon, Elijah (Ilyas), Elisha (Alyasa), Jonah (Younis), Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl), Ezra (Uzayr), Dhul Qarnayn (Cyrus the Great or Alexander the Great), Luqman, Zechariah, John the Baptist (Yahya), Mary and Jesus.* The last two are: *Book 29: The Life of Prophet Muhammad from Birth to the Revelation* and *Book 30: Teacher's Manual.* The last, *Book 30,* has been prepared for the teacher's Lesson Plans.

At the beginning of each lesson, there is an exercise in critical thinking skills. These consist of one of the following: The Nine Intellectual Standards, The Eight Elements of Reasoning and The Seven Moral Traits. The Eight Elements contain thirty-five strategies. However there is no specific order as to how they should be learned and incorporated into our thinking process.

Once we understand the critical thinking skills and then apply them to the signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. Once the skills as presented in the Quranic message are put into practice with the grace of God, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behavior.

Each lesson is followed by questions for classroom discussion or for dialogue. At the end of each lesson there is an assessment/assignment for students to use while they are developing critical thinking skills as they hopefully learn HOW the Quran teaches critical thinking.

SOURCES

The sources for the history include the works of Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hashim, Waqidi, Ibn Sad and commentaries by Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn, Tustari and Sayyid Qutb. The sources for the commentaries of Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn and Tustari have been used with the permission of the publisher, the Royal Institute of Ahl al-Bayt in Jordan. They are available on their website www.altafsir.com.

The inclusion of excerpted commentaries (tafsir) by Sayyid Qutb's In the Shade of the Quran (available online) in this Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series is because Sayyid Qutb is considered by some extremist groups as their intellectual source. By including excerpts from his eighteen volume Quranic commentary, extremists cannot disclaim the importance of learning critical thinking as this series is to help young adults learn HOW to think using self-realization (tahqiq) and critical thinking (furqan) skills taught by the Quran. This in order to arm young adults with the ability to choose reason over any irrational extremist ideology that is presented to them.

TERMINOLOGY

All Quranic signs are translations from The Sublime Quran. For the Muslim, the Quran is the Word (Logos) of God. It is this Word of God that has inspired artists, artisans, poets, philosophers and writers, those who had been the exponents of Islamic culture and civilization for almost 1500 years. Yesterday and today's Muslim wants to know more about each Word that God chose for His revelation through the Quran. This realization, in turn, prompted the translation of The Sublime Quran, an attempt to give the sense of unity within the revelation to a non-Arabic speaking reader.

There are several points to note about the terminology used in the translation of the Quranic text and the commentaries.

1. The blessed Prophet did not bring a new religion; he came to confirm what was right in the messages of the previous Prophets. Does this translation speak to the universality of the Quran? The Quran tells the Prophet, the mercy to all of humanity, to speak to people in their own language. Following his example, in addition to the translation being unbounded by time, in several sensitive cases, the word chosen to translate an Arabic word is also of a universal or inclusive rather than a particular or exclusive nature. This adds to the broadening of the perspective and scope of the Quran so that it becomes inclusive rather than exclusive to one particular group of people. In other words, in this way a larger audience can relate to its message.

2. The actual word "Islam" comes from the verb, "to submit" (aslama), submission (sallama), and ones who submit (muslimun). The Quran refers to itself (the Quran) from the very beginning of the revelation (68:35).

3. As previously indicated, the four books (Book 25, Book 26, Book 27 and Book 28) are the stories of the other Prophets and Messengers mentioned in the Quran. While these stories do have lessons to be learned by the Prophet

and those who heard the revelations as well as for us today, they do not refer directly to Prophet Muhammad and his prophethood following the beginning of the revelation. What remains in these books of the Quranic signs in the 24 years of the chronological Quran relate directly to him, what he did and what he was told to say. This allows us to understand his life directly from the Quranic message, the Quranic Sunnah, without any interruption of the stories about previous Prophets and Messengers.

4. Most English translations of the Quran refer to the "Children of Israel." The word "Israel" when used in the Quran refers to Jacob, the patriarch of the children who followed him such as Joseph. Therefore, it should be the "Children of Jacob" as it appears in these texts.

5. The word "kufr" and "kafir" have been translated here as "ingratitude" and "ungrateful" where the context allows. This is the first meaning of the word and many of us in our lifetime have met Muslims who are "ungrateful." It is the ungrateful Muslims who practice intolerance by declaring anyone who says: Peace be upon you (as-salam alaykum) as a non-believer (with what is called takfir). In those cases, it would not be suitable to call them "unbelievers" or "infidels," but it is clearly appropriate to refer to them as being "ungrateful" and this would include the early Quraysh, ungrateful for God's revelation and prophethood of Muhammad, who ridiculed the Prophet and fought against the Quranic message of love, forgiveness and peace.

6. Yet another example of the use of inclusive language in an attempt to speak to people in their own language, is the use of God instead of Allah. Many English speaking Muslims, as well as many of the English translations of the Quran to date, use Allah when speaking English instead of God. The intention on the part of the speaker is to maintain a sense of piety. They feel that using Allah in English moves them in that direction. Many even claim that the word Allah cannot be translated.

However well-intentioned a person may be, when speaking English, the use of the word Allah instead of God, first of all, does not follow the Quranic verse that tells the Prophet to speak to people in their own language. Subsequently, it does not follow the Sunnah of the Prophet who did speak to people in their own language.

In addition, it creates a divide between Muslims who use the word and the English speaking people of various faiths to whom they are speaking. In effect, it creates the illusion that there is more than One God—Allah and God. The response of the English speaking person of another faith is to say: I do not understand your religion; you have a different God than I do and you call Him Allah.

It needs to be clearly explained to English speaking Muslims that, unlike what they may feel, they do not have a monopoly on the word Allah. Arabic speaking Christians and Arabic speaking Jews also refer to God as Allah. The Old Testament and New Testament, when translated into Arabic, use Allah for God.

English speaking Muslims, therefore, need to recall the message of the Quran that God is One (tawhid). In addition, the Prophet did not bring a new religion but confirmed what was correct in the messages of previous Prophets, namely, that God is One. Finally, they need to follow the example of the Prophet, as the Quran says he is the model or example to be followed, by speaking to people in their own language.

7. The Arabic language, much like old English, has the second person singular (masculine: anta (where the verb ends in ka). The English equivalent is the subject: "thou" or the object: "thee" or the possessive: "thy." As these are no longer in common usage in English, wherever the original Arabic uses one of these terms, the word "**you**" or "**your**" appear in bold font so that the reader knows the original was the second person singular. When the Quran is speaking directly to the Prophet, it uses the pronoun "thee" or "thou" so it is an important distinction to make.

Using you (second person plural) is done to help English speaking readers, recognizing that using the second person plural pronoun you (masculine: antum where the verb ends in masculine: kum) for God is to intimate that God is plural, the only sin in the Quran that is unforgivable. By putting the pronoun **you** in bold font indicates the true intention.

8. For the Arabic word "ayah," the English word used in these texts is "sign" rather than the Biblical term, "verse."

9. Several of the signs were abrogated over time. However the indication of a sign being abrogated was done after the complete revelation of the Quran. Whether or not a sign was later abrogated does not change the fact that the first Muslims who listened to the Quran, heard the signs that may have later been said to have been abrogated and that a hafez of the Quran recites all the signs as they appear in the original Arabic revealed to the Prophet. Whatever signs scholars later determined to be abrogated are still part of the Quran and, therefore, are not relevant to learning to be a Quranic critical thinker, learning HOW to think.

10. The first number that appears when the Quranic Chapters begin refers to the chapter number in the chronological order of the revelation so that Quranic Chapter 110 which was the last to be revealed is number 114 in the chronological order.

11. It is to be noted that whenever the name of Muhammad, Prophet Muhammad or the Prophet are used, one may say a silent prayer of blessings for him.

CRITICAL THINKING• COMPONENT

Quranic critical thinking (furqan, discernment) is a process that analyzes how we think. It is a 3-step process: **I**: Quranic critical thinkers apply the **Nine Intellectual Standards** (logic, being definitive, connected, appropriate, have worthiness, include numerous viewpoints, have right judgment, clarity, being fair and just) to: **II**: **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** (point of view, purpose, questions, information, inferences, concepts, assumptions, im-

plications): in order to develop: **III: The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** (belief in One God (tawhid), God-consciousness (taqwa), virtuous conduct (birr) or integrity through moral discipline, empowering constancy ('azm) and courage, persevering in goodness (sabara), love (hubb) or empathic altruism (ihsan) and being fair and just (rashad). The signs (ayat) in each section (ruku) teach any or every one of the **Nine Intellectual Standards** or any and every one of the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or any or every one of the **Seven Quranic Moral Traits.**

This is the key to critical thinking. We do not learn "what" to think, but, rather, "how" to think. Using the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** as an example, critical thinking can be summarized in the following sentence: Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** and consequences. We use **concepts,** ideas and theories to **interpret information** (data, facts and experiences) in order to **answer questions,** solve problems, and resolve issues.

The point of view in all cases is that of the Quranic message and the various individuals and groups that it addresses as this series is a course in Quranic Studies as well as a course in the chronological history of the life of the blessed Prophet (sira). Each student is encouraged to come up with his or her own questions and responses to those questions in order to learn how to become the Quranic critical thinker as the Quranic teaches us HOW to think.

It is important to note that there is no correct or incorrect answer. The important point is to go through the process with as many of the sections as one is able to do. Little by little, this will help each student or reader to develop into critical thinkers or "discerners" of the Quranic message creating a bond between them and the Quranic message.

Once we learn to analyze signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. It is important to note that the order of **The Nine Intellectual Standards** or **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or **The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** is not important. With the grace of God, once all are present, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behaviors.

THE NINE INTELLECTUAL STANDARDS

1. LOGIC (REASONABLE: 'AQALA, 'AQL)
2. DEFINITIVENESS (TO BE PRECISE: MUHKAMA)
3. CONNECTEDNESS (CONTAINING COMPLEXITIES AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS: (MUQTARIN)
4. APPROPRIATENESS (TO MAKE RELEVANT: SADID)
5. WORTHINESS (FOCUSING ON THE IMPORTANT, NOT TRIVIAL,

TO BE SIGNIFICANT: AHL)
6. NUMEROUS OR MULTIPLE VIEWPOINTS: 'DHARA'A)
7. RIGHT JUDGMENT (RUSHD)
8. CLARITY (UNDERSTANDABLE, TO BE CLEAR: TABAYYANA)
9. BEING FAIR AND JUST ('AQL, RIGHT-MINDED (RASHAD))

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES

1. **EMBODYING A POINT OF VIEW, FRAME OF REFERENCE, PERSPECTIVE (RECOLLECT, BEAR IN MIND, TAKE FOR GRANTED: TADHAKKUR)**
   - THINKING INDEPENDENTLY
   - DEVELOPING INSIGHT INTO EGO-CENTRICITY OR SOCIO-CENTRICITY
   - EXPLORING THOUGHTS UNDERLYING FEELINGS AND FEELINGS UNDERLYING THOUGHTS
   - DEVELOPING INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY
2. **GENERATING A PURPOSE, AIM, GOAL, OBJECTIVE: (CONSIDER: RA'A)**
   - CLARIFYING ISSUES OR CONCLUSIONS
   - CLARIFYING AND ANALYZING THE MEANINGS OF WORDS OR PHRASES
   - READING CRITICALLY: CLARIFYING OR DISCERNING THE SACRED TEXT
   - LISTENING CRITICALLY: THE ART OF SILENT DIALOGUE
3. **RAISING QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, ISSUES: (REFLECT: TAFAKKARA)**
   - PRACTICING DISCUSSION: CLARIFYING AND QUESTIONING INTERPRETATIONS
   - REASONING DIALOGICALLY: COMPARING INTERPRETATIONS
   - REASONING DIALECTICALLY: EVALUATING INTERPRETATIONS KNOWLEDGE, WISDOM
   - DEEP QUESTIONING
4. **USING INFORMATION, DATA, FACTS, OBSERVATIONS, EXPERIENCES, REASONED JUDGMENTS (EVIDENCE: BASIRAH)**
   - DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION: CLARIFYING VALUES AND STANDARDS
   - ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ACTIONS
   - DISTINGUISHING RELEVANT FROM IRRELEVANT INFORMATION
   - GIVING REASONS AND EVALUATING EVIDENCE
5. **MAKING INTERPRETATIONS, INFERENCES, CONCLUSION, SOLUTIONS (UNDERSTANDING: TABASSUR)**
   - ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ARGUMENTS AND INTERPRETATIONS
   - MAKING PLAUSIBLE INFERENCES OR INTERPRETATIONS
   - RECOGNIZING CONTRADICTIONS
   - NOTING SIGNIFICANT SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES
6. **UTILIZING CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS, PRINCIPLES, MODELS AND VOCABULARY (RECALL: IDHDHAKARA)**
   - COMPARING ANALOGOUS SITUATIONS: REFRAMING INSIGHTS TO NEW CONTEXTS

DEVELOPING ONE'S PERSPECTIVE: CREATING OR EXPLORING ARGUMENTS
MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS
COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE
THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING
7. MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PREPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED (OPINIONS: ZUNUN)
8. GENERATING IMPLICATIONS, CONSEQUENCES (PONDER, EVALUATE: TADABBUR)
GENERATING OR ASSESSING SOLUTIONS
EXPLORING IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES IN DETAIL

1. Embodying a **Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective** (Recollect, Bear in Mind, Take to Heart (*tadhakkur*)):Whenever we think, we think within a point of view. What is the Quranic point of view in these signs? Does the Quran follow universal intellectual values of clarity, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, logic, fairness?

2. Generating a **Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective** (Consider (*ra'a*)): My purpose in addressing the Quranic purpose in these signs is . . .? Know exactly what you are after. Make sure you are not operating with a hidden agenda and that your announced and real purposes are the same. Whenever we think, we think for a purpose. What is the Quran's fundamental purpose in revealing these signs? Are there multiple points of view?

3. Raising **Questions, Problems, Issues** (Reflect (*tafakkara*)): What is the key question I am trying to answer. State the question as clearly and precisely as you can. Details are very important.

4. Using **Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments** (Evidence (*basirah*)): Actively seek the information most relevant to the question. Include in that information options for action, both short-term and long-term. We use experiences, facts and data that the Quran gives us. What information does the Quran give in these signs? What information do I need to answer my question?

5. Making **Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusions, Solutions** (Understanding (*tabassur*)): After reasoning (discerning) the above points, decide what the best answer (conclusion) to the question is. What inferences, judgments or conclusions do these signs make? What are my most fundamental inferences or conclusions based on these Quranic signs?

6. Utilizing **Concepts, Theories, Definitions, Axioms, Laws, Prin-**

ciples, Models, Vocabulary (Recall (*idhdhakara*)): The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are ... ? Figure out all significant ideas needed to understand and answer your question. You may need to analyze these concepts. Use a good dictionary. Inferences or conclusions are based on Quranic concepts and theories. What is the most basic concept in my question? What Quranic terms have I learned?

7. Making **Assumptions, Presuppositions, Taking for Granted** (Opinions (*zunun*)): Some important assumptions I am using in my thinking are ... ? Figure out what you are taking for granted. Watch out for self-serving or unjustified assumptions. The Quranic point of view is based on some assumptions. What assumptions is the Quran using in its reasoning? What assumptions am I using in my reasoning from the Quranic revelation?

8. Generating **Implications, Consequences** (Ponder (*tadabbur*)): Evaluate options. Take into account the advantages and disadvantages of possible decisions before acting? What consequences are likely to follow from this or that decision? The Quranic assumptions and my assumptions lead to implications and consequences. What are the implications of the Quranic reasoning? What are the implications of my reasoning? Am I correct in understanding the Quranic implications?

THE SEVEN QURANIC MORAL TRAITS

1. BELIEF IN ONE GOD (TAWHID)
2. GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (TAQWA)
3. VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE (MORALLY OBLIGATED: QANATA, GOODNESS, BIRR)
4. EMPOWERING CONSTANCY, COURAGE (AZM)
5. PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS (STEADFAST: SABARA)
6. EMPATHIC ALTRUISM (LOVE, MERCY, COMPASSION: HUBB)
7. FAIRNESS (NOT SELF-SERVING OR EGO-CENTRIC: 'AQSATA)

*****

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

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I am grateful to the work of M. M. Sharif, "Philosophical Teachings of the Quran," and B. A. Dar, "Ethical Teachings of the Quran," (indicated by * in the text) in A History of Muslim Philosophy and to my dearest friend, Khalida Rahman who has been supportive of my work for over twenty-five years.

My gratitude also goes to the Center for Critical Thinking and, particularly, the online work done in youtube videos and other works by the educator-founders-members of the Critical Thinking Community, namely, the late Dr. Richard Paul and his wife and constant collaborator, Dr. Linda Elder. All indications of • throughout the text refers to quotes or paraphrases from their excellent work as part of the Critical Thinking Community, www.criticalthinking.org. My attempt has been for all the quotes and paraphrases used here to follow fair copyright use.

Whereas Drs. Paul and Elder may not have used their work in religious educational settings, due to the separation of church and state in the educating of American students, learning from their works it became clear that their teachings can help Muslim students, as well, if their method is presented through the content of the Quran. If Muslim students come to understand that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking, that is, discernment (furqan), HOW to think, they will be armed with the intellectual skills they need to confront Islamic extremism.

One of the main scholars that Islamic extremists use in their propaganda is Seyyed Qutb. In order to further arm Muslim students for any confrontation they may have with Islamic extremists who would quote that their ideas come from Seyyed Qutb, I have used his Quranic commentary, In the Shade of the Quran, in Chapter I of this work. Students will learn how, contrary to what they may be told or taught, in many cases, Seyyed Qutb's commentary (indicated by °) speaks of and describes the way that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking and Islamic extremists cannot say that I have left out their scholars.

Last, but certainly not least, I wish to thank Kazi Publications and its founder, Liaquat Ali, for his constant support and encouragement to forge new areas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqli*) will be passed to young students as they learn of a Muslim world deeply entrenched in Islamic narrative sciences (*al-naqli*).

INTRODUCTION
READING THE SIGNS: A QURANIC PERSPECTIVE ON THINKING
BY MOHAMMAD HASHIM KAMALI

The Islamic notion of *aql* (intellect) embraces the faith dimension of knowledge that is also informed by ethical values (see Chapter III). The prevailing reading of the Quran on rationality consists of a coalition of faith and reason which is also cognizant of the metaphysical aspect of reality and the limits, therefore, of human reason. This may be said to be a dividing line between the Islamic and Western conceptions of rationality, especially in its post-Enlightenment context.

Thus, it is not accurate to draw a direct parallel between them, as was the case in the Islamic discourse of the colonial period wherein many Muslim writers greatly admired the Western conception of rationality. The twentieth century Islamic discourse has shown awareness of that difference as it began to comprehend the subtleties inherent in the Western lexicon on rationality and its cultural overtones.[1]

THE DIVINE SIGNS (*AYAT*)

The Quran teaches an essential doctrine of the *ayat* (God's signs in the universe) functioning as pointers to the providential purpose at all levels of creation. Thus the Quran makes frequent references such as 'signs for a people who understand—exercise their intellect'. This evidential role of the divine signs entails an accompanying demand placed upon humans to engage in a rational understanding of the signs and draw conclusions on the discovery of truth and correct guidance.

The human reception of the signs, thus, depends ultimately upon the integrity of reason, without which humans would be incapable neither of comprehending the signs nor of responding to their message. The more abundant is an individual's native endowment of reason, the greater is the possibility for him or her to attain a larger magnitude of understanding and a higher level of response.

The nexus between faith and reason thus constitutes the hallmark of intelligent Islamic spirituality, wherein human intellect and emotions are guided toward harmony with one another. The Quran repeatedly provokes its reciters to think about the signs of God in the universe and within themselves, to understand God's illustrious presence in them, and ultimately to vindicate the truth. The word *ayah* and its plural *ayat* occur in the Quran over 400 times, although the whole of the Quran introduces itself as a collection of *ayat*. To quote the Quran: *We will cause them to see Our signs on the horizons and*

within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is The Truth. (41:53) And, *On the earth are signs, for the ones that are certain and in yourselves. Will you not, then, perceive?* (51:20-51:21)

God reveals the truth in a variety of ways, some explicit and others by allusion, the latter mainly through the modality of the signs, in order to provoke and engage the human intellect. The signs of God cannot be readjust off the face of the signs but require thinking and reflection. This is indicated in the phrase: *We will cause them to see Our signs ...* which suggests that the signs may not be instantaneously visible to the naked eye. The whole concept of signs seeks to forge a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* (38:29) A sign is also a portent and allusion to something other than itself and should not therefore be seen as the final message and purpose of the revelation containing it.

Approximately 750 verses, or nearly one-eighth of the Quran, exhort the readers to study nature, history, the Quran itself, and humanity at large. The text of the Quran employs a range of expressions in its appeal to those who listen (*yasma'un*), those who think (*yatafakkarun*), those who reflect (*yatadabbarun*), those who observe (*yanzurun*), those who exercise their intellect (*ya'qilun*), those who take heed and remember (*yatadhakkarun*), those who ask questions (*yas'alun*), those who develop an insight (*yatafaqqahun*), and those who know (*ya'lamun*).[2]

These and their derivatives (mostly occurring in the active verbal form) consist essentially of open invocations and encouragement to thinking that is not limited by a methodology or framework. *Meditate they not, then, on the Quran* (*afala yatadabbarun al-Qur'an*) (47:24) *Tadabbur* means concentrated and goal-oriented thinking provoked by the challenge to find something new or to solve a difficult problem.

Quranic references to thinking and the exercise of intellect occur in conjunction with basically five major themes: Belief in the Oneness and generosity of God (*tawhid*); reflection on the Quran; the human being and the universe; historical precedent; and thinking itself.

References to *aql* (intellect) and its derivatives occur on 49 occasions in the text. The typical Quranic expression, *ulu'l-albab* (those who possess vision and understanding), and its synonym, *ulu'l-nuha* (people endowed with intellectual abilities) occur 33 times in the text. Such expressions are frequently juxtaposed with the exposition of signs, such as in the sign: *Thus, God makes manifest His signs to you so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (2:242) or in the sign: *Surely, We made manifest the signs to you so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (57:17). Repeated references to pondering over the signs are variously nuanced such that they embrace within their fold the widest spectrum of people who may be endowed with different intellectual abilities and endowments.[3]

Al-Isfahani defines thought (*al-fikr*) as the power of the mind that facilitates access to knowledge (*'ilm*). Thinking (*al-tafakkur*) is the movement of that power which is driven by the intellect (*al-'aql*), and this can only occur when an initial image of the subject is attainable in the mind of the thinker. Thinking cannot, therefore, proceed over something of which no image exists in the mind. This can be said of the self of God, for example, as we have no image on which to focus our thought.[4]

The human being can only think over the attributes of God through the observation of His signs. Broadly speaking, thinking proceeds over the whole of the created universe without any exception; indeed, the Quran repeatedly invites such in respect to both the physical and abstract aspects of reality, both in the present and in regards to bygone history that is only perceived by the intellect rather than sense perception. Often the Quran gives examples, parables, and narratives of other nations, and then follows them with the reminder, usually addressed to the Prophet, to recount the narratives of the past so that the people may think and reflect over them:

And recount to them the tiding of him to whom We gave Our signs. (7:175)

And there are the parables that We propound for humanity so that perhaps they will reflect. (59:21)

Truly, in that are certainly signs for a folk who reflect. (30:21)

A hierarchy of five perceptive-cognitive functions is also suggested, including and extending through hearing, sight, thinking, dhikr remembrance, and certainty.[5]

Given such a scale of intensified perceptive understanding, the Quran propounds the notion of *ulul'l-albab*, the thoughtful individuals who are possessed of proper understanding and response. *'Aql* is thus tied to the cognitive dimension of faith.

Significantly, the very term for reason and intelligence in Arabic, *al-'aql*, has at the core of its basic meaning the practical idea of "restraining" and "binding," that is, of holding one's self back from blameworthy conduct—being an interior self-imposed limit. Quranic commentators understand thinking (*tafakkur, tafkir*) as pondering and reflection, which is a mental activity and process, not an outcome.

Thinking (*tafakkur*) is considered as a form of worship of God if it is done with sincerity and good purpose. *'Aql* in its Quranic conception is also one that conceives the truth, and it is always in search of it. This conception of *'aql* precludes one that is rigid, arrogant, and misleading. Some have also drawn the conclusion from the ubiquitous Quranic emphasis on thinking that all Muslims must strive to be thinking individuals.[6]

Al-Qaradawi has quoted Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's (d. 751/1350) own observation as well as some epithetic statements, the latter narrated from other leading figures to the effect that "thinking for an hour is better than worship of many years," and another statement that "thinking for an hour is superior

to a whole night of prayer." To this Ibn Qayyim added that "thinking is the act of the heart whereas worship is the act of one's limbs, and the former is superior to the latter."

The pious caliph Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz (d. 101/718) is similarly quoted: Thinking over the bounties of God is the best form of worship. Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad went so far as to say that: Thinking—*al-tafkir*—is an Islamic obligation. Just as God Most High ordered us to worship Him by performing prayer and fasting, He also ordered us to think in numerous verses and in so many different ways, all of which vindicate thinking as one of the cardinal messages of the Quran.[7]

The Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge espoused with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression *al-tafaqquh fi'l-din*, that is, understands the religion, signifying a rational and inquisitive approach to constructing a Quranic worldview.

Islam, in other words, advises analytical knowledge and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely dogmatic approach. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions: Faith based on detailed analysis (*al-iman al-tafsili*) as opposed to undigested and uncomprehended faith (*al-iman al-ijmali*). The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the religious scholars of all the leading schools of thought. Thus it is declared in a sign: *But a section of people only that they become learned in the way of life and that they warn their folk.* (9:122).

We also note the distinction between thought-based knowledge and transmitted or received knowledge reflected in the twin juristic and hadith-related expressions of knowledge based on understanding (*'ilm al-diraya*), and report-based and transmitted knowledge (*'ilm al-riwaya*). The former is based on understanding and insight (*diraya wa tafaqquh*) and takes priority over the latter. Whereas *'ilm al-riwaya* relies mainly on memory and retention, *'ilm al-diraya* is based on cognition, understanding, and analysis.

Thus, if there are hadith reports, or any factual reports for that matter, which do not stand to reason and understanding, they would be most likely discounted and abandoned, with the exception only of devotional matters (*'ibadat*) which are based on faith and submission more than on rational analysis.

Another feature of the Quranic vision of thinking is indicated in its emphasis on wisdom and good judgment (*hikmah*) which signifies the quality of thinking, its regard for values, and its outcome. Wisdom and good judgment can easily be said to be more important than technical know-how and expertise, as it can guide expert knowledge as to its proper application and the attainment of excellence.

The Quran mentions *hikmah* twenty times, and in about ten of these it is immediately preceded by the word Book or *kitab*, which is a reference to divine scripture—primarily the Quran, but also other divinely revealed scriptures. The text, thus, says with reference to Jesus: *And He teaches him the Book and wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel.* (3:48) The juxtaposition of *kitab* and *hikmah* is often contextualized by a reference to the sending of prophets who teach the people and guide them with scripture and wisdom (e.g., *wa yu'allimuhum al-kitaba wa'l-hikmata*) as it is said of the Prophet Muhammad: *And teaches you the Book and wisdom* (2:159) and: *Teaches them the Book and wisdom* (62:2 ff); the descendants of Prophet Abraham: *We gave the people of Abraham the Book and wisdom* (4:54); and of Luqman: *We gave Luqman wisdom* (31:12). The holistic, superior, and indivisible value of *hikmah* in the Quran is underscored in one of its signs to the effect that when God bestows wisdom on someone that person is indeed granted an immense source of goodness: *And whomever is given wisdom, then, surely, was given much good and none recollects no doubt but those imbued with intuition.* (2:269).

To mention *hikmah* together with the Book evidently means that the Quran should be read with wisdom and divorcing the one from the other by taking a totally dogmatic approach to the Quran goes against the divine purpose and intention of its revelation. To read the Quran in the light of *hikmah* thus means a comprehensive reading that reaches beyond the obvious meaning of its words to encapsulate the goal and purpose of its message and then also reflection on the ways and means of how its benefits can be realized for the individual and society.[8]

The repeated juxtaposition of the "Book and *Hikmah*" in the Quran led some commentators, such as the Successor, Qatadah ibn Diama al-Sadusi (d.118 H), Ibn Wahhab, the disciple of Imam Malik (d. 179/795), and the Imam al-Shafii (d. 205/820) himself to the somewhat unusual observation that "*hikmah*" is a reference to the Sunna of the Prophet. Many have taken and followed this view; but since the text does not specify such a meaning for *hikmah*, the word should convey its natural and unqualified meaning as I have depicted in this presentation.

Good judgment, insight, balance and avoidance of extremes, the ability to distinguish between truth and falsehood, and procedural accuracy are commonly associated with *hikmah* and *hikmah* as such becomes a dimension of evaluative thinking in. its Quranic idiom. Besides, when the Quran declares that God Most High endowed the Prophets David and Solomon and also the renowned sage Luqman with *hikmah*, it could not have referred to the Sunna of the Prophet Muhammad, as Sunna as such did not exist in those times.

The Quranic usage of *hikmah* reinforces the holistic quality of thinking. *Hikmah* also seeks to forge a close tie between reason and emotion (*'aql wa galb*) thereby encouraging what is now known as emotional intelligence. This

is how the Quran and also the Sunna often deliver their messages, for, unlike the modern statutory laws and texts, the Quranic guidance, commands, and prohibitions are often espoused with appeals to the heart and mind of their readers.[9]

Al-Isfahani defined *hikmah* as the realization of the truth through knowledge and intellect and it is manifested in the performance of benevolent deeds.[10] According to another definition: Wisdom signifies comprehension of the truth and reality and the ability to avoid corruption in one's quest to attain perfection."[11]

Random House Dictionary of the English Language similarly defines wisdom as: Knowledge of what is true or right coupled with just judgment as to action. Wisdom is thinking informed by the light of the heart that often leads to action and contemplates its consequences in relationship with other relevant factors. This may strike a note with the renowned hadith in which it is declared that: Fearing God is the pinnacle of wisdom (*ra's al-hikmati makhafat Allah*)."[12]

It is presumably for this reason that the great religions of the world have urged the seekers of knowledge to combine it with wisdom. It is wisdom that confers a higher quality on thinking and helps knowledge to be used for the promotion of good giving it meaning and direction.

In an effort to train the individual to enhance his or her quality of thinking, al-Ghazali (d. 505/1111) discusses the two sources of knowledge that Muslim tradition has recognized. One of these is through human teaching and learning (*al-ta'allum al-insani*) and the other through divine teaching (*al-ta'lim al-rabbani*).

The former is externally transmitted from teacher to student, whereas the latter is conveyed by the Universal Intellect which is superior, more intense, and more effective than human teaching. This knowledge is internally acquired either through revelation (*wahy*), which is a prerogative of the Prophets, or it is acquired through meditation, thinking, and reflection.

Al-Ghazali subscribes to the view that the essence of all knowledge is centered in the inner self of the human person in much the same way as growth potential that is vested in the soil and seed, and it is through teaching that the individual's potential is developed.[13] These two aspects of knowledge, that is, the external and the internal, are complementary to one another. This is because no one can possibly teach or learn from any teacher all the sciences, some of which are learned through teaching but the rest inferred by the reflective thought of the individual. It is therefore important that the avenues of learning remain open both through teaching and through inner reflection, thinking, and illumination. This is another way of saying that all knowledge is acquired and developed through the senses, inner reflection and thinking, both of which partake in natural endowment and development through external transmission and teaching.

Al-Ghazali's views on the internal and external sources of knowledge tended to correspond with those of Ibn Sina (d. 428/1037), but which differed, at least partially, from those of the second/ninth century Ikhwan al-Safa (c. 373/983). All knowledge, according to the latter, is acquired through the senses and none inheres in human nature. Knowledge that is developed through thought and reflection also originate in the senses. The same analysis is extended to the axiomatic knowledge of postulates that are derived and confirmed through the senses. In support of this theory Ikhwan al-Safa have cited the Quranic verse: *And God brought you out from the wombs of your mothers and you know nothing.* (16:78). All knowledge is therefore acquired knowledge, a view which may strike a closer note with some of the modern theories on the subject.[14]

Muslim thought in the middle ages did not admit the ontological distinction between tangible entities that could be sensuously apprehended and entities of a spiritual or subliminal nature. This may be said to be a more sound and realistic view of reality than is allowed for by the modern positivist doctrines of science. Being is manifested at various levels and in several forms, none of which is less real than the other. Arabic thought employed the notions systematized in Stoic theory that divide being into three locations: Verbal utterance, psychic representation, and reality—without this last in any sense having exclusive title to Being.

Al-Farabi (d. 950 CE) took up this view and assimilated psychic representation to the entities of reason. Others rehearsed this division with the addition of a fourth location, that of Scripture. Reality thus had a four-fold manifestation, depending on whether the subject existed immediately in itself or whether its like was graven in the mind (*dhihn*, psyche) composed of sounds, which together indicates the psychic representation, or was manifested in characters standing for sound and speech. All four have a basic characteristic in common which is existence (*wujud, haqiqah*).[15]

The Islamic and Western perceptions of creative and evaluative thinking both recognize this to be a skill that is developed through training and controlled exercise. It is through training and thinking that we adopt new patterns of perceiving reality that we are able to see differently and creatively. It is generally acceded that creative thinking and critical thinking go hand-in-hand and complement one another. Critical thinking means "involving or exercising skilled judgment or observation." Thinking is critical when it evaluates the reasoning behind a decision. Such evaluation must, however, be carried forth in a constructive manner.[16]

The purpose of critical thinking is to achieve understanding, evaluate viewpoints, and solve problems. In general, one's thinking is likely to become critical when concrete learning experiences precede abstract thought.[17] This strikes a parallel note, in its Islamic idiom, with thinking that is espoused with *hikmah*.

The famous yet controverted hadith: The first (being) God created is the intelligence (*awwalu ma khalaqa Allahu al-'aqla*), sparked prolonged discussions among Muslim thinkers over many centuries over the implications of this statement. Among the issues debated was the priority of reason over revelation and the respective role of each in their mutual inter-dependence.

Another issue was whether the disparity among humans in respect of reason also affected the modalities of moral obligation. Some prominent thinkers including Abu Bakr al-Razi (d. 313/925) apparently advocated the primacy of reason over the revelation. This would be properly known as "rationalism," which deems the primacy of reason over revelation. This is different from "rationality" which means treating any issue by using reason without giving reason priority.

SOURCES AND INSTRUMENTS OF KNOWLEDGE

Commenting on the Quranic passage quoted earlier, Muhammad Iqbal observed that the Quran regards both self (*anfus*) and world (*afaq*) as sources of knowledge. God reveals His signs in inner as well as outer experience. The Quran thus opens fresh vistas of knowledge in the domain of our inner experience. Mystic experience and intuition, then, however unusual and abnormal, must now be regarded as perfectly natural and open to scrutiny like other aspects of human experience." But inner experience is only one source of human knowledge. The outer experience in the Quran, Iqbal continues on the same page, unfolds two other sources of knowledge—nature and history, and it is in tapping these sources of knowledge that "the spirit of Islam is seen at its best".

The Quran sees the signs of reality in the sun, the moon, the alternation of day and night, the perpetual changes of the winds, the variety of human colors and tongues, and in fact in the whole of nature as revealed to the sense-perception of man. The Muslim's duty is to reflect on these signs and not to pass by them as if he is deaf and blind *They have hearts with which they understand not. And they have eyes with which they perceive not. And they have ears with which they hear not. Those are like flocks. Nay! They are ones who go astray. Those, they are the ones who are heedless* (7:179), for he who does not see these signs in this life will remain blind to the realities of the life to come. The divine signs are observed through sense-perception using mainly the faculties of hearing, sight, and intellect: *Journey they not through the earth? Have they not hearts with which to be reasonable or ears with which to hear?* (22:46) The emphasis in this sign is on the faculty of reason and understanding, suggesting that not all of our information about nature comes directly from sensation, for if that were the case we would be no different from animals.

Frequent references to sense-perception as the principal mode of receiv-

ing the signs show the scientific/experimental import of the Quran. The Quran goes even further to suggest sense perception as the only avenue of knowledge, as the text already reviewed provides: *And God brought you out from the wombs of your mothers and you know nothing. And He assigned to you the ability to hear and sight and mind so that perhaps you will give thanks.* (16:78) Knowledge of the signs is therefore acquired through the use of these faculties. In another sign, the Quran praises those who listen to the word and follow the best of it: *Those who listen to the saying of the Quran and follow the fairer of it. Those are those whom God guided. And those, they are imbued with intuition.* (or make the best possible interpretation thereof) (39:18). This sign apparently subjects the data of sense-perception to the exercise of intellectual selection. The text also teaches that sense-perception does not perceive all reality: *So I swear an oath by what you perceive and what you perceive not.* (69:37-69:38). Certainty (*yaqin*) may also be beyond the reach of human intellect, as the human mind may be blurred by the variables of time and space. What is deemed certain today may be uncertain tomorrow.

We also note that according to the teachings of the Quran, the universe is dynamic in its origin, finite, and capable of increase. Early Muslim thinkers do not seem to have grasped the Quranic emphasis on inductive reasoning and experimentation. It was indeed a slow realization for Muslim thinkers to note "that the spirit of the Quran was essentially anti-classical". Putting full confidence in Greek reasoning, Muslim thinkers tried to understand the Quran in the light of Greek philosophy, which in the beginning of their careers they had studied with so much enthusiasm.

The substance of Iqbal's analysis on this subject is also upheld by Malik bin Nabi (1905-1973), who understands the creative impulse of the Quran as the motivating force behind the efflorescence of science at a time when Muslim thinkers began to grasp the full impact of the Quran on experimentation and inductive reasoning.[18]

The dynamic conception of the universe in the Quran is also seen by its conception of life as an evolutionary movement in time. History thus constitutes the third source of knowledge in the Quran. It is one of the most essential teachings of the Quran, as Iqbal has further observed, that nations are collectively judged, and suffer for their misdeeds here and now. The Quran thus constantly cites historical instances, and urges upon the reader to reflect on the past and present experiences of humanity: *Customs passed away before you. So journey through the earth; then, look on how had been the Ultimate End of the ones who deny.* (3:137)

If a wound afflicts you, surely, a wound afflicted the folk similar to that. And these are the days We rotate among humanity so that God knows those who believed and takes witnesses to Himself from among you. (3:140)

And: *And of whom We created there is a community that guides with The Truth, and with it, it is just. And those who denied Our signs, We will draw*

them on gradually from where they will not know. (7:181-183)

The Quran's interest in history as a source of human knowledge extends farther than mere indication of historical generalizations. "It has given us one of the most fundamental principles of historical criticism."[19] Since accuracy in recording facts is an indispensable condition of history as a science, accuracy depends ultimately on those who report them. The reporter's personal character is thus an important factor in judging his testimony. The Quran says *O those who believed! If one who disobeys drew near to you with a tiding, then, be clear so that you not light on a folk out of ignorance.* (49:6). It is the application of the principle embodied in this sign to the reporters of the Prophet's traditions out of which were gradually evolved the canons of historical criticism.

A scientific treatment of history, however, requires a wider experience, a greater maturity of practical reason, and a fuller realization of certain basic ideas regarding the nature of life and time. These are in the main three, and taken together they constitute the foundation of Quranic teaching.

(1) The unity of human origin: The Quran states: *He creates you from one soul.* (39:6) And: *O humanity! Be Godfearing of your Lord Who created you from a single soul.* (4:1). But the perception of life as an organic unity is a slow achievement. Islam sowed the germ of this aspiration and it became a Quranic assignment of us to work towards its realization. Notwithstanding the fact that Christianity, long before Islam, brought the message of equality to humanity, the Roman Empire had no more than a general and abstract conception of human unity.

On the other hand, the growth of territorial nationalism in Europe has tended to stifle the broad human element in the art and literature of Europe. European colonialism was also inspired by a self-image of superiority. Europe assumed a superior image that non-European peoples could be freely dominated, exploited, and subjugated.[20] It was quite otherwise with Islam. The impulse of Islam was from the outset to make the idea of human unity a living factor in the Muslim experience that was to be taken towards fuller fruition.

(2) A keen sense of the reality of time, and the concept of life as a continuous movement in time: The Quranic view of the alternation of day and night as a sign of the ultimate Reality which appears in a fresh glory every moment and the tendency in Muslim metaphysics to regard time as objective—all this constituted the intellectual heritage and ideals of Islam.

(3) The merger between religious and secular values: This is a unique feature of Islamic thought which is distinguished by its attempt to bring harmony between them, probably for the first time in history. It was in the state of Madinah that we encounter a clear example where universally proclaimed moral values formed the criteria of political judgment. Political leaders and statesmen were expected to recognize not only the value of efficiency, but also of justice, human dignity, equality, and freedom. In his renowned *Phi-*

losophy of History, Hegel (1770-1831) recognized that the unity between the secular and the spiritual took place in Islamic society and civilization long before it made any impact in the modern West: We must therefore regard (the reconciliation between the secular and spiritual) as commencing rather in the enormous contrast between the spiritual religious principles, and the barbarian Real World. For spirit as the consciousness of an inner world is, at the commencement, itself still in the abstract form. All that is secular is consequently given over to rudeness and capricious violence. The (Muslim) principle, the enlightenment of the oriental world, is the first to contravene this barbarism and caprice. We find it developing itself later and more rapidly than Christianity; for the latter needed eight centuries to grow into a political form.[21]

The modern West followed the example of the historical Islamic world in demanding that holders of political power operate under a set of moral rules. But as the modern West harmonized the secular and religious only nationally, the international realm was free to operate under the dynamics of power politics and secular rudeness. This failure was a cause of the senseless violence that claimed over 100 million war victims in the twentieth century. Recognition of the danger of the purely secular politics led to the creation of the United Nations, yet even this effort was undermined by political realists who enjoyed a disproportionate sway among the political pundits of Europe and America.

Safi has rightly noted the irony that contemporary Muslim societies have unfortunately followed a similar course in decoupling the secular and the religious and now find themselves entangled in a crisis of legitimacy. Many Muslim regimes are driven by the logic of power and operate outside the realm of moral correctness. It is alarming to see that this decoupling has impacted the religiously inspired movements, which seem to succumb to the logic of power in their readiness to employ amoral--even immoral--strategies in their fight against political corruption and oppression.[22]

OBSTACLES TO CORRECT REASONING

The Quranic emphasis on pondering over the signs is also underscored by a set of guidelines to ensure a correct outcome of reflection and thinking over them. The text thus draws attention to a series of exclusions and factors that stand in the way of the proper functioning of intellect:

(1) Pursuit of caprice (*hawa*) which may consist of love, hatred, pomposity and prejudice that confound impartiality and sound judgment: *Had you considered he who took to himself his own desire as his god and whom God caused to go astray out of a knowledge, sealed over his having the ability to hear and his heart and laid a blindfold on his sight? Who, then, will guide him after God? Will you not, then, recollect?* (45:23)

And if you had followed their desires after what drew near you of the knowledge, there is not for you from God either a protector or a helper. (2:120)

But if they respond not to you, then, know that they only follow their own

desires. (28:50)

And: *And obey not him whose heart We made neglectful of Our Remembrance and who followed his own desires and whose affair had been excess.* (18:28)

The choice is between two alternatives: caprice (*hawa*) and guidance (*huda*); the former evidently renders obscure one's attempt to attain the latter.

(2) Pursuit of conjecture in the face of certitude: And surely conjecture (*al-zann*) avails nothing against the truth (*al-Haqq*). *And most of them follow nothing but opinion. Truly, opinion avails them not against The Truth at all.* (10:36)

And follow up not of what there is not for you knowledge of it. Truly, having the ability to hear and sight and mind, each of those will have been that which is asked. (17:36) Knowledge and truth stand in contradistinction with the pursuit of conjecture. Note that the text says one should not follow conjecture until it is established and elevated to the rank of knowledge. It does not say that one should avoid conjecture altogether. In another place, conjecture occurs side by side with *hawa* or that which they themselves desire: *They follow nothing but opinion and that for which their souls yearn.* (53:23) This is the kind of conjecture or opinion that is meant.

Knowledge is established by sense-perception that often begins with a measure of speculation and doubt but which is affirmed by the light of reason and conviction. Some commentators maintain that the main context for this guideline is religion: Thus it is said that one should not take speculative positions in matters of belief. As for scientific enquiry and pursuit of knowledge, conjecture is neither discouraged nor avoidable.[23]

The ultimate purpose of this engagement is to attain the truth. Once the truth is attained, one should then commit oneself to it and observe it: *And what else is there after The Truth but wandering astray. Where, then, turn you away?* (10:32)

Completed was the Word of your Lord in sincerity and justice. There is no one who changes His Words. (54) (6:115).

(3) Blind imitation of others: The correct exercise of reason in Islam is tied to personal conviction as opposed to indiscriminate following of others, hallowed custom, and precedent. These must be judged in the light of reason and abandoned if found deviant and misleading: The misguided will say, as the Quran provides: *Nay! We will follow whatever we discovered our fathers were following on it —even though their fathers had been not at all reasonable—nor are they truly guided.* (2:170)

And: *Enough is what we found our fathers upon. Even though their fathers had been knowing nothing nor are they truly guided?* (5:104)

This was the response that Prophet Abraham and other great prophets received from their detractors, but the text address them again and again that both you and your ancestors were clearly misguided. *Certainly, We gave Abra-*

ham his right judgment before. And We had been ones who know of him when he said to his father and his folk: What are these images to which you be ones who give yourselves up to? They said: We found our fathers as ones who are worshippers of them. He said: Certainly, you and your fathers had been in a clear wandering astray.(21:51-21:54)

Forsake those who took to themselves their way of life as a pastime and as a diversion and whom this present life deluded. (6:70)

Is it that your formal prayer commands you that we leave what our fathers worship? (11:87)

As we shall presently elaborate, indiscriminate imitation of others is widely held to be the single most damaging cause of the decline of creative thinking among Muslims.

(4) Oppressive Dictatorship: The Quran takes to task arrogant dictators and those who support them and follow them. Hence the plea of those who say: *Our Lord! Truly, we obeyed our chiefs and our great ones. They caused us to go astray from the way* (33:66) should be of no merit. In a number of other places the text denounces the Pharaoh and Karun for their oppressive ways who misled their people in rejecting the guidance that was conveyed to them. *Pharaoh and his Council but they followed the command of Pharaoh. And the command of Pharaoh was not well-intended.* (11:96)

DECLINE OF CRITICAL THINKING•

I shall not retrace well-documented history that Muslim thinkers were pioneers in the creation of new knowledge. It was due to the impact of the Quran that, in contrast to the Greeks who excelled in deductive method of reasoning and logic, Muslim scientists distinguished themselves in inductive and experimental approaches to scientific enquiry. The golden period of Muslim science started around 700 AD and lasted until about 1350 AD. Great thinkers such as Ibn Sina, Jabir ibn Hayyan, Abu Bakr Zakarriya al-Razi, Abu Rayhan al-Biruni, Ibn al-Nafis al-Dimashgi, al-Khawarizmi, and many others have left a rich legacy of contributions to the advancement of sciences in anatomy, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, optics, etc.[24]

After the fourteenth century creative thinking began to decline in the Islamic world due to a variety of factors, including the Mongol invasion and burning of Baghdad, the defeat of the Muslim Arabs in Spain and the continuing crusades, the collapse of the Ottoman caliphate, and the ensuing onslaught of European colonialism. The creative impulse of Islamic thought suffered setbacks as a result. Muslims were also beset with many internal problems including the alienation of philosophers, scientists, and thinkers from the theologians, sectarian controversies, and the prevalence of intellectual conservatism and imitation of past authority (*taqlid*)).

Philosophy and the sciences fell into a rapid decline while more rigid forms of instruction and narrower curricula prevailed. It was argued that or-

thodoxy was being threatened and that there was a need to restrain thinkers in order to defend religion. The latitude and diversity of discourse that expanded the scope of religious sciences, theology (*kalam*), commentary (*tafsir*), hadith, and jurisprudence (*fiqh*) gave way to narrower criteria of *kufr*, *bidah*, and *taqlid* and the so-called closing of the door of *ijtihad* (*sadd bab al-ijtihad*).[25]

More recently, a certain abuse of Islamic authority operated by a dogmatic radicalism has exacerbated the decline of creative thought among Muslims. The situation is not helped by the prevalence of passivity in popular culture concerning the dogmatic excesses of these ardent proponents of imitation of past authority (*taqlid*). One of the salient features of this mindset is a certain ignorance of the essential impulse of the Quran on creative thought. Malik bin Nabi put it succinctly that the crisis of a civilization and a society at a critical point of its history "is not the paucity of its material objects but the poverty of its ideas."[26]

WHAT IS *IJTIHAD*?

The Quranic appeal to rational thinking and enquiry is not restrained by the methodology of *ijtihad*. There is, in fact, no clear text on *ijtihad*[27] in the Quran. *Ijtihad* as a concept originates in the hadith of the Prophet and the practice and precedent of companions. The methodology of *ijtihad* which is the basic theme of the science of the sources of law (i.e. *usul al-fiqh*) is itself a product of *ijtihad*. It seems that the Prophet also saw *ijtihad* as a creative impulse rather than engaging in the technicalities of legal reasoning—as the *usul al-fiqh* later developed in abundance. When the Prophet spoke of *ijtihad* or when he approved of its application, he seems to have done so in terms of *ijtihad* qua creative thinking.

One would readily admit that imposing restrictions on thinking, even if it were possible, by cultures and legal traditions could be exaggerated, in which case it would be prone to acquiring negative dimensions. One would not, on the other hand, advocate free thinking that is not limited by some kind of goal-orientation and values. Even the actual process of creative thinking, as earlier noted, is a skill that could be learned and refined by stages to direct it into productive avenues. The liberal tradition of the West tends to impose minimal restrictions on thinking whereas Islam tends to take a more guided approach to creative reasoning. Whereas both the Islamic and Western traditions recognize the authority of reason as a criterion of judgment, the liberal tradition has, unlike Islam, isolated spirituality and faith from the ambit of scientific rationality.

However, the methodology of *ijtihad* was also influenced in the course of time by a variety of factors, including the political climate, the change of caliphate (*khilafah*) to monarchy (*mulk*), Hellenistic thought in relationship to analogy (*qiyas*) and its syllogistic components, and the rift between the religious scholars and ruling authorities.[28]

Usul al-fiqh and its proposed methodology followed a difficult course and became embroiled in technicality that had adverse consequences for *ijtihad*. What is needed now is to recapture the purity of this vital concept, to make *ijtihad* as our principal instrument for originality and healthy adjustment, but also to revise and reform some aspects of the theory of *ijtihad* itself that are no longer responsive to the prevailing conditions and challenges of our time.

1) to recognize the validity of collective and consultative *ijtihad* (*ijtihad jama'i*) side by side with that of *ijtihad* by individual scholars;

2) to allow experts in other fields such as science, economics, and medicine to carry out *ijtihad* in their respective fields if they are equipped with adequate knowledge of the source evidence of Islam. They may alternatively sit together with, or seek advice from, those learned in *Shariah*.

Ijtihad has in the past been often used as an instrument of diversity and disagreement rather than of unity and consensus. Although disagreement must admittedly be allowed in principle, yet there is a greater need today for unity and consensus. Scholars and learned bodies should not perhaps encourage excessive engagement in diversity of schools and sects but try to find ways that would help to close the gap between them and encourage unity on principles. This may require policy guidelines for different settings and countries, and, if so, that should be reflected in our approaches to *ijtihad*. Certain guidelines may also be provided by thinkers and leaders to stimulate consensus-oriented *ijtihad* within the ranks of the judiciary and legislative assemblies.

Ijtihad has in the past been conceived basically as a legal concept and methodology. Our understanding of the source evidence on *ijtihad* does not specify such a framework for *ijtihad*. Rather, we think of the original conception of *ijtihad* as a problem-solving formula for the problems encountered by individual Muslims and the Muslim community. This would confirm our view of the need to broaden the scope of *ijtihad* to other disciplines beyond the framework of *fiqh* and *usul al-fiqh*.

According to a legal maxim of Islamic jurisprudence, there should be no *ijtihad* in the presence of a clear text of the Quran and Hadith (*la ijtihad ma'al-nass*). This maxim should also be revised. This is because of the possibility that the text in question could now be seen in a different light and given a fresh interpretation in a different context. What we are saying is that the legal text may need to be understood first and that by itself may involve *ijtihad*. Hence *ijtihad* may not be precluded if it could advance a fresh understanding of the text in the first place.

The persistent decline of critical reason among Muslims is due partly to the notion that the exercise of personal judgment and *ijtihad* ceased with the epoch-making works of the legists and imams of the past. Added to this is the prevailing mindset that a Muslim should follow one or the other of the established schools of thought and abandon his judgment in favor of interpretations

of the earlier centuries whose originators could have no conception of the necessities of the twenty-first century Muslims. Until about 1500 CE, independent *ijtihad* allowed Muslims and Muslim societies to continually adapt in the face of changing societal conditions and new advances in knowledge.

Unfortunately, as Muslim civilization began to weaken about four centuries ago in the face of Western advances, Muslims began to adopt a more conservative stance in an attempt to preserve traditional values and institutions. As a result Muslim thinkers became inclined to view innovation and adaptation negatively. For all the rhetoric and symbolic form of the neo-radicals that tend to dominate the audience of Muslims, the spirit of Islam is often palpably missing from their endeavors, while more than ever *ijtihad* is needed where women, education, and politics are concerned.

ISLAM AND THE WEST

Scientific rationality essentially reduces intelligence to the level of neural chemistry where mental and behavioral phenomena are understood merely as manifestations of physical processes. It tends to deprive us of our noblest dimensions (faith, love, beauty), separates the soul from the body, and the sensory from the intelligible. In the realm of economics, we are merely a producer and consumer of goods and is moved solely by our individual self-interest. This too is opposed to the Islamic viewpoint which also sees in us morality and transcendent faith.

This physicalist analysis of intelligence is now increasingly being seen as conceptually inadequate. The real question is whether one may admit a human dimension which is autonomous and irreducible to a physical mass. In Moravia's phrase "can one posit something which exists and yet at the same time is non physical? Do the rejection of the soul and the achievements attained by bio and neurosciences oblige us to hold that man is nothing but body?"[30] Recently these have been attempted by some creative thinkers to reconceptualize intentions of 'reason' and 'intelligence' along anti-materialistic lines drawing on the experience of older non-Western traditions, or even popular folk conceptions.[31]

Islamic philosophy—which mainly studies purposes, as against science which mainly studies causes—sees, in line with the Quranic teaching, the role of objects and events as signs of divine presence and action. Faith is understood by Muslims not as a limitation on science but as its vista for enrichment and perfection.[32]

The variant perspectives of Western philosophy and science are also behind the Western puzzlement why Muslims have not become more secularized. This unwarranted assumption has in the past led to mistaken assessments of Islam and continues to foster genuine misunderstanding concerning the real nature of Islamic religion and intellectual traditions. The misunderstanding is unfortunately not unique to Westerners. For the majority of Muslims today

are also woefully uninformed of the depth and scope of their rich heritage on the authoritative validity of reason. Thinking Muslims should work to vindicate the symbiotic relation of faith and reason in their religion and see it as a source of enrichment and contribution of Islam to human understanding and civilization.

CONCLUSION

This essay advanced a Quranic perspective on thinking, which is affirmative in critical and goal-oriented thinking and also provides a set of guidelines that ensures its purity and purpose from negative reductionist influences. The guidelines so provided are also rich in advancing a spiritual dimension with the understanding that thinking which is not informed by morality and faith can lose its direction and purpose and can even become harmful to human welfare. From the Quranic vantage point, the sciences of nature should be key to our cognition of the signs of God in the universe. For this may be instrumental in solving individual and social problems without interrupting the cosmic order and the human habitat on earth. The blatant disregard of ethical values in science has weakened scientists' sense of responsibility and contributed to the degradation of the human condition on the globe.

Since thinking is a skill that can be advanced by self-application and training, it is amenable to guidance, bereavement, and enrichment. Universities and institutions of learning in Muslim countries are generally short of resources, and those who have the means still fall short, to their detriment, of nurturing the culture of reading and research among their students and scholars. Centers of higher learning may do well to establish a new order of relationship between the natural sciences and humanities, and between all fields of knowledge and human welfare and also the avenues of benefit to society. The present-day education system is due for a reappraisal in order to instill creative thinking and breadth of vision among students and scholars that is informed by the inter-relatedness of the various disciplines of learning. This could be done, as one observer suggested, "by adding sufficient number of courses in humanities to the science and engineering curricula, by cross-disciplinary interaction and collaboration."[33] The main characteristic of the human sciences, from the Islamic perspective, is that they are not value-free and have to be incorporated within the value system of Islam that is informed by the ethical and human dimension of values.

It is ironic to note, however, that the vast majority of Muslims are wont to rote reading of the Quran which is patently vacuous and devoid of thinking. The Quran is usually read, committed to memory, and cited for its spiritual merit rather than intellectual stimulation and enrichment. This is evidently not the advice one obtains from the Quran itself Al-Qaradawi has rightly observed about the current realities of public education in Muslim countries that "the system relies on memorization and cramming more than it does on compre-

hension and analysis. A typical weakness of this method is that the memorizer forgets as soon as the exams are over. But if what is learned is founded in understanding and comprehension, its substance will remain in the mind and will not be prone to oblivion so quickly."[34]

But the issue that we raise here is well-entrenched and originates in the overall emphasis that most educationists and jurists of earlier times have placed on the study of the Quran, Hadith and *fiqh* manuals, often calling attention to words and sentences of the text at the expense of comprehension and analysis. The basic approach to Quran studies thus emphasized correct pronunciation and memorization. This repetitive system of learning was particularly pronounced in the context of child education, although it was not confined to this framework as other and more advanced levels of Islamic scholarship also bore the same influence.[35]

Notwithstanding the profound influence of the Quran on the thoughts, mores, and cultures of Muslim individuals and societies, thinking by its nature does not lend itself to any predetermined framework and guideline. It seems that the Quran also seeks only to provide signs and signposts on thinking, but the subjective and innately individual bent of thinking is often inspired by imagination and insight which cannot be encapsulated by definitions and guidelines. A creative mind is unique by its attributes, and thinking that originates in a learned and upright individual is one of the greatest gifts of creation that can itself fit the description of divine example, or sign, of God on earth.

It remains to be added though that imaginative thinking has also been sparkled by sources and influences among great Muslim thinkers of other cultures and traditions—just as we note also that the great thinkers of history emerged in all regions, cultures, and religions. The substance of these statements is upheld in a renowned Hadith in which the Prophet instructed the Muslims to "seek knowledge, even unto China," and in another Hadith that "wisdom is the lost property of the believer; he is entitled to it wherever he finds it."

Knowledge and wisdom must therefore be ultimately seen as the shared achievements of humanity, endowed and posited by its outstanding and creative thinkers. This is also known from the fact that the outcomes of creative thinking are often shared and experienced far beyond geographical locales and frontiers—more so perhaps in the age of globalization.

It is hoped that the great thinkers and leaders of humanity make it a part of their agenda and commitment to narrow down the distances and divides between the intellectual and cultural traditions of the world and aspire them to the veritable vision of a shared destiny and wider human fraternity in their deliberations.

Mohammad Hashim Kamali[36]

PREVIEW

The text of *The Year 2* begins with the continuing revelations. The chronological order of the chapters of the Quran that follow throughout the series is based on the list accepted by al-Azhar University in Cairo and is considered to be the official order. It differs greatly from the chronological order developed by Western scholars over the centuries and is much more detailed.

Book Year 2 begins with Lesson 7 and Quranic Chapter 81, which is the 7th Chapter revealed, followed by Quranic Chapters 87, 92, 89, 93, 94, 103, 100, 108, 102, 107, 109, 105, 113, 114, 112 and, finally, Chapter 53, the 23rd Chapter revealed.

Only a few signs of the first four chapters revealed were revealed at the beginning of the revelation, and the remainder at a later time. 73:20 that has been recorded to have been revealed one year later. Therefore, it is in Appendix 1 of *Book Year 2*.

PRELUDE

ABU BAKR ABD GUS FRIENDS BEAR WITNESS TO THE TRUTH

When Abu Bakr becomes a Muslim, he shows his faith openly and calls others to God and His Messenger. Abu Bakr is a man whose society is desired, well-liked and of easy manners. He knows more about the genealogy of the Quraysh than anyone else and of their faults and merits. He is a merchant of high character and kindliness. His people often come to him to discuss many matters with him because of his wide knowledge, his experience in commerce, and his sociable nature. He begins to call to God and to submission to the One God all whom he trusts of those who come to him and sit with him.[1]

Abu Bakr of the Taym clan, who is two years younger than Muhammad, has long been a familiar friend of Muhammad. With him he probably has lamented the gross darkness of Makkah, and seeks after a better faith. He lives in the same quarter of the city as Khadija.[2] Abu Bakr is a diligent and successful merchant, and being frugal and simple in his habits, possesses at his conversion about 40,000 dirhems.

His generosity is well-known, his charity unwearying. The greater part of his fortune is expended in the purchase of such unfortunate POW/slaves as from their inclination to the new faith are persecuted by the unbelieving Makkans; so that but 5,000 dirhems are left when eleven years later he migrates to Madinah with Muhammad. Abu Bakr is unusually familiar with the history of the Quraysh, who often refer to him for genealogical information. His judgment is calm and impartial, his conversation agreeable, his demeanor affable and engaging; his society and advice are therefore much sought after by the Quraysh, and he is popular throughout the city.[3]

SAAD IBN ABI WAQQAS

Several members of various Quraysh clans convert because of Abu Bakr. Three are teenagers: Saad ibn Abi Waqqas of the Zuhrah Clan who is a nephew of Muhammad's mother, Amina. He is 16 or 17.

When the Messenger's companions offered the formal prayer, they went to the outskirts of the city so that their people could not see them praying. While Sad ibn Abi Waqqas was with a number of the Messenger's companions in the same area of Makkah, a band of the ungrateful came upon them while they were praying and rudely interrupted them. They blamed them for what they were doing until they came to blows, and it was on that occasion that Saad struck one of them with the jawbone of a camel and wounded him.

ZUBAYR IBN AL-AWWAM

Zubayr ibn al-Awwam of the Asad ibn Abd al-Uzza Clan, the grandson of Khuwaylid, Khadija's father, is younger than Saad. He is also the grandson of Abd al-Muttalib by his daughter Safiyya.

TALHAH IBN UBAYD ALLAH

Talhah ibn Ubayd Allah of the Taym (Taym Clan), age 16 or 17, is related to Abu Bakr. His grandfather is a brother of the grandfather of Abu Bakr. Talhah comes from a merchant family.

When Talhah is at Bustra with a caravan, a monk asks him whether or not Ahmad has yet appeared in Makkah.

Talhah asks: Who is Ahmad?

The monk answers: He is the son of Abd Allah, the son of Abd alMuttalib. This is the month in which he is to arise and he will migrate from Makkah to the country of date trees and the stony salt land (Madinah). You should haste away to meet him.

Talhah leaves immediately for Makkah. He is told upon his arrival that Muhammad has said that he is a Prophet and that Abu Bakr has declared for him. Talhah then accepts allegiance and goes with Abu Bakr to Muhammad. Muhammad rejoices when he heard the story of the monk.[4]

UBAYD IBN HARITH

Then, there is Ubayda ibn Harith, the son of Muhammad's uncle, is ten years older than Muhammad who bears witness.[5]

UTHMAN IBN AFFAN

Among the others whom Abu Bakr brings to the Prophet are Uthman ibn Affan of the Umayyah sub-clan of Abd Shams. He had been born in Taif into a wealthy Quraysh merchant family. He is seven years younger than Muhammad. When Uthman's father dies, he leaves a large inheritance to him. He also becomes a merchant. He is to become one of the most wealthy men among the Quraysh. Though of the Umayyad stock, he is also, on his mother's side, grandson of Abd al-Muttalib.

Muhammad's daughter Ruqiyya, being now, or shortly after, free from her connection with Utba (son of the hostile Abu Lahab), the Prophet gives her in marriage to Uthman, whose wife she continues to be until her death some ten or twelve years later. Uthman is at this period between thirty and forty years of age.

ABD AL-RAHAMAN IBN AWF BEARS WITNESS AND BRINGS HIS FRIENDS

And Abd al-Rahman ibn Awf of the Zuhrah clan, the same clan as that of Muhammad's mother, Amina. He is married to Umm Kulthum bint Uqba. Similar to Abu Bakr, Uthman and Talhah, Abd al-Rahman is also a merchant He goes to see Muhammad accompanied by his friends who all bore witness to the truth of Muhammad's message that came from God.

Abd al-Rahman is accompanied on his first visit to the house of Muhammad by his friends, who at the same time embrace the Quranic message:

Ubayd Allah, son of Muhammad's uncle Harith Abu Salama[6]

Abu Ubayda, subsequently a warrior of note

Uthman ibn Maun. The latter has already abandoned wine before his conversion, and is with difficulty persuaded by Muhammad to renounce the asperities of an ascetic life. His family appears to have been well inclined to the Quranic message, for we find two brothers, a son, and other relatives, in the list of early believers.[7]

Lesson 7. Critical Thinking Strategy
Clarifying Issues or Conclusions •

When there is a clear statement given about an issue in a Quranic sign, it is important for Quranic critical thinkers to first recognize what is needed to settle or solve it and then evaluate solutions or conclusions. In other words, before students can agree with or disagree with a statement, they must clearly understand it Quranic critical thinkers first understand the sign(s) and then make a discerning judgment They then are able to ask the appropriate questions that would lead to understanding and evaluating the situation.

Quranic Chapter 81: The Darkening (al-Takwir)
Signs 81:1-81:29

Makkah: *When the sun will be darkened (81:1)*
and when the stars plunge down (81:2)
and when the mountains
will be set in motion (81:3)
and when the pregnant camels are ignored (81:4)
and when the savage beasts will be assembled together (81:5)
and when the seas are caused to overflow (81:6)
and when the souls will be mated (81:7)
and when the buried infant girl will be asked (81:8)
for which impiety she was slain (81:9)
and when the scrolls will be unfolded (81:10)
and when tire heaven is stripped off (81:11)
and when hellfire will be caused to burn fiercely (81:12)
and when the Garden will be brought close, (81:13)
every soul will know to what it was prone. (81:14)
So no! I swear an oath by the stars that recede, (81:15)
by the ones that run, the setting stars (81:16)
and by the night when it darkened (81:17)
and by the morning when it breathed, (81:18)
truly, the Quran is a saying from a generous Messenger, (81:19)
possessed of strength, with the Possessor of the Throne,
secure, (81:20)
one who is obeyed and, again, trustworthy. (81:21)
And your companion is not one who is possessed. (81:22)
And, certainly, he saw him on the clear horizon. (81:23)
And he is not avaricious for the unseen, (81:24)
nor is it the saying of the accursed Satan. (81:25)
So where are you going? (81:26)
Truly, it is not but a Remembrance to the worlds (81:27)
to whoever among you willed to go straight. (81:28)

But you will not, unless God wills,
the Lord of the worlds. (81:29)

COMMENTARY°

These signs (81:1-81:29) may be divided into two parts, each of them treating one major principle of the Quranic message. The first is the principle of resurrection accompanied by a great violent or sudden change in the universe that affects the sun and the stars, the mountains and seas, heaven and earth, wild and domestic animals, as well as we human beings. The signs contain striking images drawn from the universe in both its present amazing situation familiar to us and its condition on the Day of Resurrection when everything that is familiar to us is changed beyond recognition.

The second principle is that of revelation. These signs have something to say about the angel carrying the divine revelation, the Prophet receiving it, the people addressed by it, and the Supreme Will that has shaped their nature and bestowed this revelation.

RHYTHM OF THE SIGNS

The rhythm of the chapter is one of violent movement that leaves nothing in its place. Everything is discarded, smashed or scattered. The movement is so violent that it excites and frightens. It alters every familiar situation for the early believers. There is no protection and, indeed, no safety other than what is granted by God, the Eternal.

Thus, the rhythm of the chapter has, on its own, the effect of pulling the human heart and soul away from everything that had appeared to be safe and secure in order to seek peace, safety and protection with God.

As the chapter is so short, the rhythm, images and expressions combine together to produce a very strong and lasting effect.

UPHEAVAL IN THE UNIVERSE

These signs (81:1-81:14) sketch a scene of great upheaval that envelops the whole universe. It is an event that reveals every guarded secret and leaves nothing hidden away. The Prophet is told that every person faces what he has put forward for the Day of Reckoning and Judgment. The great events mentioned indicate that the present familiar state of the universe, with its perfect harmony, measured movement, controlled relations, perfected by the Creator whose work is flawless, will suffer a complete break down. Its role will be finished. Along with all creation, it will move into a new predetermined phase of life, unlike anything known to us in this world.

The chapter aims to establish this idea of the inevitable upheaval in the hearts and minds of the believers unless a person establishes a

firm bond with the Truth of God, the Eternal, who never changes when everything else changes and disappears.

Pregnant Camels Ignored

The Arabic description of the camel: *And when the pregnant camels are ignored* (81:4) specifies that she is in her tenth month of pregnancy. When in this state, she is to the Arab his most valuable possession because she is about to add to his wealth a highly valued young camel, and to give him a great amount of milk which he and his family will share with the new-born animal. However, on that day, which will witness such overwhelming events, these priceless camels will be left without care, completely untended. The Arabs who were the first to be addressed by this sign never left such camels untended, except at times of the gravest of dangers.

The Arabic term used: *Caused to overflow* (81:6) may mean that the seas will be overfilled with water, from floods similar to those which characterized the early stages of life on earth. On the other hand, earthquakes and volcanoes may remove the barriers now separating the seas so that the water of one will flow into the other.

The pairing of souls: *And when the souls will be mated* (81:7) may mean the reunion of body and soul at the time of resurrection. It may also mean their grouping.

Girls Buried Alive

The value of human life must have sunk very low in 7th century Arabia for the next sign says: *And when the buried infant girl will be asked for which impiety she was slain.* (81:8-81:9). There existed a convention of burying young girls alive, for fear of shame or poverty. The Quran describes this practice in order to portray its horror and denounce it as a practice of tribal honor. The condemnation of this practice by the Quran is to destroy tribal honor and save humanity from sinking into the depths of animality.

In chapter 16, The Bee, we will read: *When any of them is given good tidings of a female, his face stayed as one that is clouded over and he chokes. He is secluded from the folk because of the dire tidings he was given. Will he hold it back with humiliation or will he trample it in the earth dust? Truly how evil is the judgment they give!* (16:58- 16:59)

And in Chapter 17: *And kill not your children in dread of want. We will provide for them and for you alone. Truly the killing of them has been a grave inequity.* (17:31)

But for now, this second year of the revelation, the sign underlies cultural practices that killed female children in an extremely cruel way.

They were buried alive! According to reports from those days, the Arabs used different ways of doing so. Some would leave the girl until she was six years of age. The father would then say to his wife to dress the girl in her best clothes and make her presentable because she would be visiting her prospective in-laws. He would have already dug a hole for her in the desert. When the girl got there, he would tell her that the hole is a well and then tell her to look down it. As she stood at the edge, he would push her into the hole and as she fell, he would throw sand over her and bury her.

In certain tribes when a pregnant woman was about to give birth, she would sit over a hole in the ground. When the baby was born she would first establish its sex. If it was a boy, she would take him home, and if it was a girl, she would throw her in the hole and bury her. If a father decided not to bury his daughter alive, he would bring her up in a condition of deprivation until she was old enough to tend sheep or cattle, giving her only clothes made of rough wool and making her do this type of work.

Those Arabs who did not kill their young daughters or send them to mind the flocks, had different methods of ill-treating women. If a man died, the head of the clan would throw his gown over the widow. This was a gesture of acquisition that meant that the widow could not marry anyone except the owner of the gown. If he was attracted to her, he would marry her, paying absolutely no regard to her feelings. If he did not marry her, he would keep her until she died so as to inherit any money or property she might leave behind.

PRE-QURANIC ATTITUDE TOWARDS WOMEN

Such was the attitude of the society in Arabia towards women based on tribal honor. The Quran condemns this attitude and these practices. It forbids the murder of young girls and shows its abhorrent and horrifying nature. It is listed as one of the subjects of reckoning on the Day of Judgment. Here, the chapter mentions it as one of the great events which overwhelms the universe in total upheaval. We are told that the murdered girl will be questioned about her murder. Those listening to these words who had committed such heinous crimes may have wondered about their fate.

TRIBAL HONOR

The social order of tribal honor will never help women gain a respectable, dignified position. This had to be decreed by God. The way of life God has chosen for humanity secures a dignified position for both men and women who share the honor of having a measure of the divine spirit breathed into them equally.

QURANIC VALUES REPLACE TRIBAL HONOR

With the Quranic message, the idea of a female being a financial burden to her family is no longer of any consequence in determining her position and the respect she enjoys. Such considerations have no weight on the scales of heaven. Real weight belongs to the noble human soul when it maintains its relationship with God. In this men and women are equal.

OUR DEEDS MADE KNOWN

This: *And when the scrolls will be unfolded* (81:10) is a reference to the records of our deeds. That our deeds will be made known must have been caused some reflection on the part of those listening to this revelation.

This image: *And when the heaven is stripped off* (81:11) corresponds closely to the opening of our secrets. When the word 'heaven' is used, the first thoughts extend to the blue cover above our heads. Its stripping means the removal of that cover.

The last scene of that fearful day is portrayed by the next two signs: *And when hellfire will be caused to burn fiercely and when the Garden will be brought close.* (81:12-81:13) This is the first mention of hell in the Quranic message.

Where is hell? How does it burn? What fuel is used in lighting and feeding its fire? The only thing we know of it is that its *fuel is humanity and rocks.* (66:6) Its true nature and its fuel prior to that is part of God's knowledge. Heaven, on the other hand, is brought near to those who have been promised admission. They see it to be of easy access. Indeed, the expression here shows it is ready to receive its dwellers.

When all these great events take place throughout the universe, changing the status of all life, no one can entertain any doubt about what they have done in this present life, or what they have carried with them into the next life: *Every soul will know to what it was prone.* (81:14) In the midst of all these overwhelming events, every soul shall know for certain what sort of deeds it has brought and that it cannot change, omit from or add to what it has done.

The listeners learn that they will be separated from all that has been familiar to them, and from their world as a whole. Everything will undergone a total change except God. If a person turns to God, he will find that His support is forthcoming when the whole universe is overwhelmed by change. Thus ends the first part of this chapter, leaving us with a vivid impression of the universal upheaval on the Day of Resurrection.

A SPLENDID UNIVERSAL SCENE

The second part of the chapter opens with a form of oath using some very beautiful scenes of the universe. Essentially, this oath is made to assert the nature of revelation, the angel carrying it, and the Messenger receiving and delivering it to us, as well as people's attitudes to it, all in accordance with God's will: (81:15-81:29)

The stars referred to here are those which turn in their orbit, and are characterized by their swift movement and temporary disappearance. In translating the text we have to forego the metaphor used in Arabic which draws an analogy between these stars and the deer, *the ones who run,* as they run at great speed towards their homes, disappear for a while and then reappear at a different point. This metaphor adds considerable liveliness and beauty to the description of the movement of the stars, which echoes the fine rhythm of the expression.

Again, the rhythm of the Arabic sign gives a feeling of life, depicting the night as a living being: *And by the night when it swarmed.* The beauty of the Arabic expression is of surpassing excellence. The same applies to the next sign: *So no! I swear an oath by the stars that recede,* is indeed more effective in portraying dawn as alive. breathing: *And by the morning, when it sighed.*

Its breath is the spreading light and the life that begins to stir in everything. It is doubtful to many whether the Arabic language, with its inexhaustible wealth of imagery and vivid expression, can produce an image portraying dawn that can be considered equal to this Quranic image in aesthetic effect. After a fine night, one can almost feel that dawn is breathing.

Any person having a special appreciation of art and beauty will readily perceive that the divine words of the first four signs of this second part of the chapter constitute a precious gem of expression and description: *So no! I swear an oath by the stars that recede, by the ones that run, the setting stars and by the night when it swarmed and by the morning, when it sighed.* (81:15-81:18) This descriptive wealth adds power to human feelings as those listening and the rest of us respond to the natural phenomena to which the signs refer.

THE TWO MESSENGERS

As the Quran makes this brief, full-of-life description of these phenomena, it establishes a spiritual link between them and us, with the result that, as we listen or read, we feel the power which created these phenomena, and the truth which we are called upon to believe. This truth is then stated in a manner that fits in superbly with the general theme of the chapter: *The Quran is a saying from a generous*

Messenger. possessed of strength, with the Possessor of the Throne, secure, one who is obeyed and, again, trustworthy. (81:19-81:21) This Quran with its description of the Day of Judgment is the word of a noble and mighty messenger, Gabriel, the angel who delivered it to Muhammad. The chapter then gives a description of Muhammad. He is: *'generous'*, honored by God who says that he is *'possessed of strength'*, which suggests that considerable strength is required to carry and convey the Quran, *with the Possessor of the Throne, secure.* (81:20)

These qualities add up to a definite conclusion: The Quran is a generous, strong and exalted message and God takes special care of us. It is a manifestation of this care that He has chosen an angel of Gabriel's caliber to bring His revelations to God's chosen Prophet. As we reflect on this divine care we should feel humble. For we ourselves are worth very little in the kingdom of God, were it not for the care God takes of us and the honor He bestows on us.

There follows a description of Muhammad who conveys this revelation to humanity. The chapter seems to say to the ungrateful Quraysh: You have known Muhammad very well over a considerable length of time. He is your old, honest, trusted friend. Why, then, are you fabricating tales about him, when he has been telling you the simple truth which he has been entrusted to deliver to you: *And your companion is not one who is possessed. And, certainly, he saw him on the clear horizon. And he is not avaricious for the unseen, nor is it the saying of the accursed Satan. So where are you going? Truly, it is not but a Remembrance to the worlds.* (81:22-81:27)

They knew the Prophet perfectly well. They knew that he was a man of steady character, great sagacity and complete honesty. But in spite of all this they claimed that he was mad, and that he received his revelations from a satan. Some of them took this view as the basis for their sustained attack on the Prophet and his message.

Others did so out of amazement and wonder at the words revealed to him, which are unlike anything said or written by a human being. Their claim confirmed the traditional belief that each poet had a satan writing his poems, and each monk had a satan uncovering for him the secrets of the unknown world. They also believed that the satan might come into contact with people causing them to say some very strange things. They ignored the only valid explanation, that the Quran was revealed by God, the Lord of all the worlds.

The chapter counters this attitude by a reference to the surpassing beauty of God's creation, noticeable everywhere in the universe, and by portraying some universal scenes, as they appear, full of life. This method of reply suggests that the Quran comes from the same creative power that has endowed the universe with matchless beauty.

It also tells them about the two Messengers entrusted with the Quran, the one who brought it down and the one who delivered it to them, i.e. their own friend whom they knew to be sane, not mad.

The chapter tells the ungrateful that Muhammad has indeed seen the other noble and mighty angel messenger, Gabriel, with his own eyes, on a clear horizon where no confusion is possible. He is faithful to his trust and cannot be suspected of telling anything but the truth. After all, they have never associated him with anything dishonest *nor is it the saying of the accursed Satan.* (81:25) Satans, by nature, cannot provide such a straight forward and consistent code of conduct. Therefore, the signs ask disapprovingly: *So where are you going* (with your thoughts?) (81:26) How far can you err in your judgment? And where can you go away from the truth which stares you in the face wherever you go?

The Quran is *not but a Remembrance to the worlds.* (81:27) It reminds us of the nature of our existence, our origin and the nature of the universe around us. The reminder is to all men and women.

The Quran here declares the universal nature of its call right from the beginning in Makkah in the early year of the revelation, where it will be subjected to sustained and unabating persecution: *It is not but a Remembrance to the world to whoever among you willed to go straight. But you will not, unless God wills, the Lord of the worlds.*

The chapter then reminds us that it is up to every individual to choose whether to follow the straight path or not. Since God has granted everyone his or her free will, then every human being is responsible for himself: *To whoever among you willed to go straight.* (81:28) That is to say, *to go straight* is to follow God's guidance. All doubts have been dispelled, all excuses answered by this clear statement of all the relevant facts. The straight path has been indicated for everyone who wishes to be on it. Anyone who follows a different path shall, therefore, bear the responsibility for his or her actions.

The chapter concludes by stating that the operative will behind everything is the will of God: *But you will not, unless God wills, the Lord of the worlds.* (81:29) We notice that the Quran will make statements of this type whenever the will of human beings or creatures generally is mentioned. The reason for this is that the Quran wants to keep the fundamental concepts of the Quranic message absolutely clear. These include the fact that everything in the universe is subject to God's will. No one has a will that is independent from that of God. That He grants the human being free will is part of His own divine will, like everything else. The same applies to His granting the angels the ability to show complete and absolute obedience to Him and to carry out all His commandments.

This fundamental fact must be clearly understood by believers, so that they have a clear concept of absolute truth. When they acquire this concept they will turn to divine will for guidance and support, and regulate their affairs according to this will.

SUMMARY OF QURANIC SIGNS 81:1-81:29

WHO IS GOD?

It is God who will cause the Upheaval or the Darkening of the universe, mentioning a time the stars, the night and the morning, all witnessed daily events, will change from what it was then must bring a sense of awe to them. Who is this who swears oaths by parts of the universe beyond their control? Then they hear that the words are from a messenger-angel.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

Muhammad is not possessed when he says that he saw the angel-messenger Gabriel on the clear horizon. Muhammad does not seek the unseen nor are his Quranic revelation the words of satanic forces.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

Their pregnant camels, so vital to the livelihood of the small group of believers in Makkah at this time listening to the recitation (al-Quran means "The Recitation"), will be left unattended. The female children who have been buried alive will ask what she did to deserve her death. This horrendous crime calls those who hear the words to begin to question their social system of "tribal honor" and "my tribe right or wrong," a system and slogan that the Quranic message has been revealed to change. The listeners learn that their actions, recorded in their "scrolls" actually have consequences, a new thought in seventh century Arabia as well as *hellfire that will burn fiercely and the Garden that will be brought close."*

They hear that this is a message from a messenger-angel. They are familiar with angels whom they had been taught were idols worshipped by their fathers and their ancestors. The recitation then questions the minds of those who may have such thoughts about Muhammad. It asks: Where are you going with such thoughts? And then it answers: This recitation is but a remembrance to those who wish to follow the straight path-the path they had learned of in the preceding days, weeks or months: *Guide us on the straight path.* (1:6) Then comes the caveat: You may will to follow the straight path, but you will only succeed if God so wills. What would this mean? They (and we) are left to think and reflect on it. Could it mean that it is based on what God willed to show them of the straight path by means of positive instincts that He has implanted in them as well as through the Quranic revelations that He has revealed to His prophets, implying that the choice of following the straight path is open

to everyone who is willing to avail himself or herself of God's universal guidance?

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN

Choose a particular sign *(ayah)* and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS

The following questions may help the students in understanding point of view, frame of reference, perspective.

Is the purpose of these signs clear?
What would someone who disagreed with this do?
The Quran tells the Prophet to ask how they know this?
What is the answer to the Quranic question (81:26): *So where are you going?*

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to clarify how the pre-Quranic Arabs buried their female children alive.

I was able to clearly understand how the Quranic message changed this inhumane practice.

LESSON 8. CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
CLARIFYING AND ANALYZING THE MEANINGS OF WORDS OR PHRASES

Critical thinkers of Quranic studies have clear thoughts about the Quranic signs. They perceive the concepts and recognize what kind of evidence is needed to analyze the meaning of Quranic words. They know that just giving a definition is not sufficient. They must also be able to give examples of the Quranic concept.

On the other hand, uncritical thinkers see words drifting through their minds. They are not able to give examples of the concepts of the words or to critique their use of the concept. The class should clarify and analyse the purpose of the words and concepts in the Quranic signs below.

QURANIC CHAPTER 87: THE LOFTY (AL-AALI)
SIGNS 87:1-87:19

Makkah: *Glorify the Name of your Lord,*
The Lofty (87:1)
Who created and shaped (87:2)
and who ordained and, then, guided (87:3)
and who brought out the pasture (87:4)
then, made it dark colored refuse. (87:S)
We will make you recite and you will not forget (87:6)
but what God willed.
Truly, He knows the openly published
and whatever is hidden. (87:7)
And We will make easy for you an easing. (87:8)
So remind if a reminder profited them. (87:9)
Whoever dreads God will recollect, (87:10)
but the disappointed will scorn it (87:11)
even he who will roast in the great fire (87:12)
again. neither dying in it nor living. (87:13)
He, surely, prospered, he who purified himself. (87:14)
and remembered the Name of his Lord and invoked blessings. (87:15)
Nay! You hold this present life in greater favor, (87:16)
yet the world to come is better. and one that endures. (81:17)
Truly, this is in the previous scrolls, (87:18)
the scrolls of Abraham and Moses. (87:19)

COMMENTARY°

This chapter turns the whole universe into a temple whose four corners echo the praises and glorification of God, the Sublime: (87:1-87:5)

RHYTHM OF THE CHAPTER

The rhythm of the chapter. characterized by the long vowels with which each of its signs ends, imparts a feeling of the praises echoed everywhere in the universe.

GOOD NEWS FOR PROPHET MUHAMMAD

Chapter 87 brings Prophet Muhammad good news. As God charges him with the double task of delivering His message and warning people, He makes promises to him: (87:6-87:9) God takes upon Himself the responsibility of making His Messenger not forget anything of the Quran. He also promises that his path will be smoothed in all his affairs, whether they are personal or concerned with his message. This is certainly a great favor.

This Chapter 87 accurately includes the basic ingredients of the Quranic concept of life and existence: The Oneness of the Creator; the reality of divine revelation; and the certainty of the life to come with the reward and punishment it involves. The chapter also affirms that these basic principles have well-established roots in earlier divine messages: *Truly this is in the previous scrolls, the scrolls of Abraham and Moses.* (87:18-87:19)All this is in addition to the impression it imparts of the easy nature of the Quranic ideology, the Messenger who conveys it, and the nation it builds.

A FAVORITE CHAPTER OF THE PROPHET

It has been related on the authority of Ali, Muhammad's cousin and Companion, that Muhammad loved this chapter. It is reported that he used to recite this chapter and Chapter 88 in the Festival (*id*) prayers and also in Friday formal prayers. If one of the festivals fell on a Friday, Muhammad would be sure to recite these two chapters in the formal prayers.[8]

SUMMARY OF QURANIC SIGNS 87:1-81:19

WHO IS GOD?

The signs give further explanation of who Muhammad's Lord is: The Lofty, the one who creates, shapes, ordains (decrees) and guides. God knows the manifest and the hidden.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

It is his Lord who will make him recite and he will not forget but what God willed that he forget. God commands the Prophet: Glorify the name of your Lord. God will make the task easy for Muhammad. Whereas in a previous revelation (74:2) he was told to stand up and warn, now he is told that he

is commanded to remind, if a reminder profited them. (87:9)

The message confirms that Muhammad was not possessed when he says that he saw the angel-messenger Gabriel on the clear horizon. Muhammad does not seek the unseen nor are they the words of satan.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The people are used to their friends and relatives (and often themselves) swearing oaths to this or that, but now to bear oaths being taken to the stars, the night and the morning, all witnessed daily events, it must bring a sense of awe to them. Who is this who swears oaths by parts of the universe beyond their control? Then they hear that the words are from a messenger-angel. They are familiar with angels whom they had been taught were idols worshipped by their fathers and their ancestors, but here the angel is revealing the recitation to their trustworthy Muhammad.

Again, the Quran attacks the Makkan social system of tribal honor by forbidding female children to be buried alive. This horrendous crime calls those who hear the words to begin to question their social system of tribal honor and my tribe right or wrong, a system and slogan that the Quranic message has been revealed to change. The listeners learn that their actions, recorded in their scrolls. actually have consequences, a new thought in seventh century Arabia as well as *hellfire that will burn fiercely and the Garden that will be brought close.*

Imagine those early followers hearing the concept for the first time confirming that the revelation is from God. And again, reference to God's will. Who are they who will profit from the reminder? The ones who dread God. It is they who will recollect. Those who are disappointed when being reminded will roast in a fire. They will neither be dying nor living. What state could this be, neither dying nor living? Who among them will prosper? Those who purify themselves, who remember the name of their Lord and who invoke blessings. The recitation then questions the minds of those who may have such thoughts saying: Muhammad is possessed: Where are you going with such thoughts? This recitation is but a remembrance to those who wish to follow the straight path—the path they had learned of in the preceding days, weeks or months: *Guide us on the straight path.* (1:6) Then comes the caveat: You may will to follow the straight path, but you will only succeed if God so wills. What would this mean? They (and we) are left to think and reflect on it.

Some prefer the life of this world, yet the life to come is better. It is one that is eternal. All of this was in the previous scrolls of Abraham and Moses. Do they know who Abraham and Moses were? Clearly they do as the Quraysh considered themselves to be the inheritors of Abraham. The Hashim Clan traces its lineage directly back to Elijah (Ilyas) and from there back to Adam. As for Moses, there were many Jewish tribes, particularly in the Madinah area, so the people of Makkah were familiar with both Abraham and Moses.

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN

The students should choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and rewrite it in their own words and analyze it.

QUESTIONS CLARIFYING AND ANALYZING THE MEANINGS OF THE WORDS•

Give examples of a recollection and the opposite of it.
Why would the Quranic message want to bring it to our attention?
What are the practical consequences of saying this?
How do we feel about it? Why?

When giving examples and discussing them, teachers should begin with the clearest and most obvious cases and their opposite. Once the class has discussed them at length can more controversial or difficult concepts be discussed.

When clarifying a concept expressed by a phrase rather than a single word, discuss cases in which the phrase applies, instead of merely discussing the individual words.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I clarified the meaning of the phrase: *He knows the openly published and whatever is hidden* (87:7) and *We will make easy for you an easing*, being to move carefully, gradually or gently.

LESSON 9. CRITICAL THINKING MORAL TRAIT
BELIEF IN ONE GOD (*TAWHID*)

The greatest emphasis in the Quran is on the Oneness or Unity of God (*tawhid*, monotheism) which implies belief in the divine causality and the presence of moral order in the universe where people are judged according to the merit of their deeds: *Whoever does the weight of an atom of good will see it. Whoever does the weight of an atom of the worst will see it.* (99:7-99:8)

They are not judged arbitrarily: *Know that God will never be One Who Causes to alter a divine blessing when He was gracious to a folk unless they first alter what is within themselves. And, truly, God is Hearing, Knowing.* (8:53)

This moral order works without any favor, not only in the case of individuals, but also in the case of societies and peoples: *Mention when Moses said to his folk: O my folk! Remember the divine blessing of God on you when He assigned Prophets among you and assigned kings and gives you what He gave not to anyone of the worlds.* (5:20)

God has entered into covenant with human beings within the limits of this moral order with people as such and not with particular nations or races: *O those who believed! Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God and let not that you detest a folk drive you into not dealing justly. Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness. Be God-conscious. Truly, God is Aware of what you do.* (5:8)[9]

HOW DOES ONE REACH BELIEF THROUGH REASON?

The human reception of the Quranic signs depends ultimately upon the integrity of reason, without which humans would be incapable either of comprehending the signs or of responding to their message. The connection or nexus between faith and reason thus constitutes the hallmark of intelligent Quranic spirituality, wherein human intellect (cognition) and emotions (affect) are guided toward harmony with one another. The Quran repeatedly provokes its reciters to think about the signs of God in the universe and within themselves, to understand God's illustrious presence in them, and ultimately to vindicate the truth.

The whole concept of signs seeks to forge a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* (38:29)[10]

PROOF OF BELIEF IN THE ONE GOD IS THROUGH PERFORMING GOOD DEEDS

ONENESS OR UNITY IN OUR INNER SELF*

Unity, as one of the human ideals, implies unity in our internal self.

That is, a coordination of our reason, will, and action. It requires disciplining our passions and lust. It also stands for the unity of profession and practice. Belief in God is the necessary prerequisite of moral life, but it should not be mere verbal acceptance: *Truly, We caused the Torah to descend wherein is guidance and light. The Prophets give judgment with it, those who submitted to God.for those who became Jews and the rabbis and learned Jewish scholars who committed to memory the Book of God and they had been witnesses to it.* (5:44)

It must be accompanied by good deeds: *But for those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality, We place no burden on any soul beyond its capacity. Those will be the Companions of the Garden. They are ones who will dwell in it forever.* (7:42)[11]

Performing good deeds implies an attitude of mind which is motivated by a complete submission to God's will: When his Lord said to him: Submit! He said: I submitted to the Lord of the worlds. (2:131)[12]

PERFORMING GOOD DEEDS INDICATES UNITY IN OUR SOCIETY*

The ideal of unity in our society demands that people should develop a healthy social organization which traverses the middle path of moderation, integrity, goodness and morality, avoiding all forms of extreme: *Thus, We made you a middle community that you be witnesses to humanity, and that the Messenger be a witness to you.* (2:143)

The God-conscious (*muttaqī*) are advised to get together and strive so that tumult, oppression, and mischief are removed from the face of the earth. *If you accomplish not allying with other believers, there will be persecution on the earth and the hateful sin of corruption.* (8:73)

Unity also implies that members of a national or ideological group should develop ties of intimate relationship among themselves so that the ideal of an organic whole may be realized in a broader context. The Quran says that all Muslims are brothers: *Only the ones who believe are brothers/sisters, so make things right between your two brothers/sisters. Be God-conscious so that perhaps you will find mercy.* (49:10)

Have great love and affection among themselves: *Muhammad is the Messenger of God. Those who are with him are severe against the one who is ungrateful, but compassionate among themselves.* (48:29) No excuse should be allowed to stand in the way of doing good or making peace between different persons: *Make God not an obstacle with your sworn oaths to your being good, and being God-conscious, and making things right among humanity.* (2:224)

Every effort should be made to bring about conciliation between people: *No good is there in most of their conspiring secretly, but for him who commanded charity or one who is honorable or makes things right between humanity. And whoever accomplishes that—looking for the goodwill*

of God—then We will give him a sublime compensation. (4:114) Yet we should co-operate in God-consciousness, not in sin and rancor.[13] We should be kind to those in need, to neighbors, and to the wayfarers.[14]

It is to see our society through reasoned judgment. That is, any belief or conclusion reached on the basis of careful thought and reflection, distinguished from mere or unreasoned opinion on the one hand, and from sheer fact on the other. Few people have a clear sense of which of their beliefs are based on reasoned judgment (*furqan*) and which on mere opinion.•

FAMILY UNITY*

This ideal of unity also implies peace and harmony among members of a family. A woman is a mate for man so that both may dwell in tranquillity with an attitude of mutual love and kindness;[15] Each is like a garment for the other.[16] For mutual support, mutual comfort, and mutual protection. It is the duty of a man and woman to live with each other on a footing of kindness and equity.

UNITY WITH PEOPLE OF OTHER FAITHS*

This attitude of toleration is to be cultivated in our relation to people of other faiths. The Quran aims at establishing a peaceful social atmosphere where people belonging to other faiths can enjoy freedom of conscience and worship: *There is no compulsion in the way of life. Surely, right judgment became clear from error. So whoever disbelieves in false deities and believes in God, then, surely, he held fast to the most firm handhold. It is not breakable.* (2:256)

The believers are urged to purposefully rise and fight against the oppressors so that monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques in which the name of God is commemorated in abundant measure may not be pulled down. *Permission was given to those who are fought against because they, they were wronged. Truly, Powerful is God to help them, those who were driven out from their abodes without right because they say: Our Lord is God! If not for God driving back humanity, some by some other, cloisters would be demolished and churches and synagogues and mosques in which is remembered in it the Name of God frequently. Truly, God will help whoever helps Him.* (22:39-22:40)

It unreservedly praises some of the people of the Book *for their faith: You had been the best community that was brought out for humanity. You command to that which is honorable and prohibit that which is unlawful and believe in God. If the People of the Book believed, it would have been better for them. Some of them are the ones who believe* .... (3: 110)

It is as a consequence of this attitude of tolerance that according to the Quran all those who believe in God and the Last Day and practice God-

consciousness, whether they are Muslims, Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians or Sabaeans, shall get their reward from their Lord: *Truly those who have believed and those who have become Jews and the Christians and the Sabeans, whoever has believed in God and the last Day and is one who acted in accord with morality, then for them, their compensation is with their Lord. And there will be neither fear in them nor will they feel remorse.* (2:62) *And, Truly, those who believed and those who became Jews and the Sabeans and the Christians and the Zoroastrians and those who ascribed partner—truly, God will distinguish between them on the Day of Resurrection.* (22:17)[17]

The Quran gives an open invitation to the people of the Book to come together and work conjointly for the establishment of peace and social harmony based on the idea of the unity of God. *Say: O People of the Book! Approach now to a word common between us and between you that we worship none but God and ascribe nothing as partners with Him, that none of us take others to ourselves as lords besides God.* (3:64)

Unity of Humanity*

Above all, this ideal of unity leads to the conception of unity of the whole of humanity. Humanity was created from a single pair of a male and a female is and from a single breath of life.[18] All people are equal members of the human community. The only distinction recognized by the Quran is based on the degree of God-consciousness possessed by people: *O humanity! Truly, We created you from a male and a female and made you into peoples and types that you recognize one another. Truly, the most generous of you with God is the most devout. Truly, God is Knowing, Aware.* (49:13)

Quranic Chapter 92: The Night (al-Layl)

Signs 92:1-92:21

Makkah: *By the nighttime when it overcomes,* (92:1)
by the daytime when it self-disclosed, (92:2)
by Him Who created the male and the female, (92:3)
truly, your endeavoring is diverse. (92:4)
As for him who gave and was God-conscious (92:5)
and established the fairer as true, (92:6)
We will make easy for him the easing. (92:7)
And as for him who was a miser and was self-sufficient (92:8)
and denied the fairer, (92:9)
We will make falling into difficulty easy for him. (92:10)
And his wealth will not avail him when he succumbed. (92:11)
Truly, guidance is from Us (92:12)

and, truly, to Us belongs the last and the first. (92:13)
I warned you of a fire that blazes fiercely. (92:14)
It roasts none but the vile (92:15)
who denied and turned away. (92:16)
But the devout will be caused to turn aside from it. (92:17)
He who gives of his wealth to purify himself, (92:18)
and with him there is none for which recompense is expected to be given for divine blessing. (92:19)
but looking for the Countenance of his Lord, The Lofty, (92:20)
he will be well-pleased. (92:21)

COMMENTARY°

Within a framework of scenes taken from the universe and human nature, this chapter states emphatically the basic facts of action and reward.

The subject matter of the chapter, i.e. action and reward, is by nature double directional, so the framework chosen for it at the beginning of the chapter is of dual coloring. It is based on contrasting aspects in the creation of we human beings and the universe: (92:1-3) This is one form of artistic harmony used extensively in the Quran.

A JOURNEY WITH DIVERGENT ENDS

God swears by these contrasting aspects of the universe and of the creation of the human being and constitution that the striving of human beings is diverse. Since the roads they follow lead to different ends, their rewards are also diverse. Good is not the same as evil; following right guidance is unlike wrong-doing; and righteousness is different from corruption. Generosity and God-consciousness are unlike hoarding and conceit. The faithful are totally different from those devoid of faith. Variance of ways necessitates variance of destinations: (92:4-92:11)

These endeavors: *Truly, your endeavoring is diverse* (92:4), vary in essence, motives, directions and results. People have diverse temperaments, environments, concepts and concerns, so much so that every person seems to be a distinct world unto himself living in his own, special planet.

This is a fact, but along with it there is another general fact that applies to all beings and their different worlds. It groups them into two distinct classes and two contrasting positions. It assigns to each its distinctive label: *As for him who gave and was God-conscious and established the fairer as true, We will make easy for him the easing* (92:5-92:7) and another: *And as for him who was a miser and*

was selfsufficient and denied the fairer ... (92:8-92:9)

But as for him who is a miser and deems himself self-sufficient, and rejects the truth of the ultimate good: *We will make falling into difficulty easy for him. And his wealth will not avail him when he succumbed.* (92:10-92:11)

He who sacrifices nothing of himself or his wealth, professes that he is in no need of His Lord or His guidance and the ungrateful in His message and religion, makes himself vulnerable to evil. *And his wealth will not avail him when he succumbed.* (92:11) Facilitating evil and sin is the same as facilitating the way to affliction, even though the sinful may be successful and prosperous in this life. For is there any affliction worse than hell? Indeed, hell is affliction itself.

AND DIFFERENT ENDS

The second part states the fate of each group. It emphasizes firstly that the end and reward of each group is fair and inevitable, for guidance has been provided and warnings have been issued: (92:12-92:21)

One aspect of God's grace and mercy to His servants is that He has taken it upon Himself to provide clear guidance that is readily acceptable to human nature, and to explain it as well through His messages and messengers, and by means of the signs He has provided. Thus, no one has a valid argument for deviation, and no one will suffer injustice: *Truly, guidance is from Us.* (92:12) Then follows a straightforward statement of the essence of power which has control over us and everything around us, from which we can have no shelter: *And, truly. to Us belongs the last and the first.* (92:I3)

By way of elaboration on the two facts just mentioned, namely, God's provision of guidance and that to Him belongs this life and the hereafter, i.e. the realms of action and reward, there is a reminder to us that He has given clear warning to us all: *I warned you of a fire that blazes fiercely.* (92:14) It is only the most wretched of humanity who are thrown in this fire. Indeed there is no wretchedness worse than suffering in hell: *It roasts none but the vile* (92: I5) We then have a definition of such a wretched person: *who denied and turned away.* (92:16) He denies this message and turns away from divine guidance. He does not answer his Lord's beckoning so that He may guide him as He has promised any who come towards Him with an open mind.

A person who fears God will be the happiest: *But the devout will be caused to turn aside from it* (92:17), in contrast to the most hapless wretch. The chapter similarly gives a definition of such a person: *He who gives of his wealth to purify himself.* (92:18) He has no vain mo-

tive or need to satisfy any snobbery. He spends it voluntarily not out of any indebtedness, seeking gratitude from no one. His only objective is the pleasure of his Lord: *And with him there is none for which recompense is expected to be given for divine blessing. but looking for the Countenance of his Lord, The Lofty.* (92:19-92:20)

What can a person expect in return for spending his money in self-purification, and for seeking the pleasure of his Lord? The reward which the Quran states is indeed surprising, and very unfamiliar: *He* (God) *will be well-pleased.* (92:21)

Questions to Ask Students

What is your understanding of inner Unity? Of Social Unity?
Of Family Unity?
Of Unity with People of Other Faiths? Of the Unity of Humanity?
What are the Quranic arguments for each kind of unity?
Have any of you experienced this sense of Unity for yourselves?

Obstacle to Unity: Irrationality

Irrationality is defined as:

1. Lacking the power to reason.
2. Contrary to reason or logic.
3. Senseless, absurd.

Irrational, uncritical thinkers have failed to develop the ability or power to reason well. Their beliefs and practices, then, are often contrary to reason and logic, and are sometimes senseless or absurd.

If you find that you continually conclude that a rational person would b just as you behaved you are probably engaging in self-deception.

Summary of Quranic Signs 92:1-92:21

Who is God?

The chapter opens with God giving an oath by the nighttime and the daytime that it is He who created the male and the female, each with endeavors that are diverse. Guidance is from God and to God belongs the East and the West.

How are the signs directed towards the Community?

Those who give are God-conscious, ones who established what is fairer as being that which is true. While things may be made easy for members of the community, their wealth will not help them at all.

For the miser who feels he is self-sufficient and denies what is fair, he

will easily fall into difficulty. The individuals in the community are warned of a blazing fire that roars with those who deny and turn away.

It will be other than this for those who are devout. Their good deeds will turn them away from the fire. They are the ones who give of their wealth to purify themselves without expecting anything in return. They give simply to be in the Presence of God, their Lord. They are the ones who will be well-pleased.

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN

Choose a particular sign *(ayah)* and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS

Under what circumstances do you think with a bias in favor of yourself?
Did you ever become irritable over small things?
Did you do or say anything "irrational" to get your way?
Did you try to impose your will upon others?
Did you ever fail to speak your mind when you felt strongly about something and then later feel resentment?
What would a rational person feel in this or that situation?
What would a rational person do?
How does that compare with what I want to do?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I realized the importance of belief and actions, that my belief is manifested through my actions.

Lesson 10: Critical Thinking Moral Trait

Definitiveness (to be precise)

Definitiveness indicates that something is exact and accurate. It is an important aspect of Quranic critical thinking. It is part of strategies such as clarifying issues, conclusions, or beliefs and clarifying and analyzing the meanings of words and phrases. Not only is precision a standard to be used when analyzing the Quranic message, but in expressing the Quranic message as well. That is, precision of expression is implied in the above strategies and forms an important part of reasoned dialogue and dialectic.

Quranic Chapter 89: The Dawn (al-Fajr)

Signs 89:1-89:30

Makkah: *By the dawn* (89:1)
and the ten nights, (89:2)
by the even number and the odd number (89:3)
and at night when it sets out. (89:4)
Is there not in that an oath to be sworn for a possessor of intelligence? (89:5)
See Book 25 Aad and Thamud (89:6)
See Book 25 Aad and Thamud (89:7)
See Book 25 Aad and Thamud (89:8)
See Book 25 Aad and Thamud (89:9)
See Book 25 Aad and Thamud (89:10)
See Book 25 Aad and Thamud (89:11)
See Book 25 Aad and Thamud (89:12)
See Book 25 Aad and Thamud (89:13)
Then, as for the human being, when his Lord tested him (89:14)
and honored him and lauded him, he says:
My Lord honored me. (89:15)
But whenever He tested him and constricted his provision for him, he says: My Lord despised me. (89:16)
No indeed! Nay! You honor not the orphan (89:17)
and you encouraged not one another
about food for the needy (89:18)
and you consume the inheritance, a greedy consuming, (89:19)
and you love wealth with an ardent cherishing. (89:20)
No indeed! When the earth will be ground to powder,
ground to powder, ground to powder, (89:21)
and your Lord will draw near, and the angels,
ranged in rows, (89:22)

on the Day hell is brought about.
On that Day the human being will recollect.
And how will the reminder be for him? (89:23)
He will say: O would that I had put forward from this life
for the world to come! (89:24)
Then, on that Day. He will punish no one the like
of His punishment. (89:25)
And no one will bind as His restraints. (89:26)
O soul, one that is at peace! (89:27)
Return to your Lord, one that is well-pleasing, well-pleased: (89:28)
Enter you among My servants (89:29)
and you enter My Garden! (89:30)

COMMENTARY°

The present chapter follows, in general, the line of this part of the Quran, inviting the human heart to faith, urging the human being to awake, meditate and follow the path of God-consciousness.

RHYTHM OF THE SIGNS

It uses different kinds of emphasis, connotation and rhythm, but constitutes, nevertheless, a single harmonious piece of music, varying in tones but maintaining the same cadence. Some of its scenes impart a touch of quiet beauty and a light, pleasant rhythm. This is particularly evident in its opening, which describes certain charming aspects of the universe and provides at the same time an aura of worship and prayer: *By the dawn and the ten nights, by the even number and the odd number and at night when it sets out.* (89:1-89:4)

Other scenes are tense and dramatic in both what they describe and in their music, like this violent, frightening picture: (89:21-89:26) Some of the portraits drawn in the chapter are pleasing, gentle and reassuring, striking perfect harmony between subject matter and rhythm. This is especially true of its ending: *O soul, one that is at peace! Return to your Lord, one that is well-pleasing, well-pleased: Enter you among My servants and you enter My Garden!* (89:27-89:30)

We also have an outline of some human concepts and values that are at variance with faith. This part has its own style and rhythm: (89:15-89:16)[19]

A refutation of these erroneous concepts and values is provided through an exposition of the human conditions which give rise to them. Here we have two kinds of style and rhythm: (89:17-89:20)

It is clear that the latter style and rhythm serves as a bridge between the statement of erroneous human ways and that which explains their inevitable attendant fate. These signs are immediately followed

by a picture of the earth as it is leveled.

This brief overview reveals to us the numerous colors of the scenes described and explains the change of meter and rhyme according to the change of scenes. The chapter is indeed an excellent example of an exceptionally beautiful style which is varied and, at the same time, harmonious.

In Makkah, the Quranic message faced this common urge to accumulate wealth by every possible means. The weak position of orphans, and orphan girls in particular, tempted many to deprive orphans of their inheritance in different ways. The ardent love of wealth, the craving to accumulate it through usury and other means, isa distinctive feature of Makkan tribal society as it is a distinctive feature of all societies based on tribal honor at all times.

These few signs do not merely expose the true nature of such an attitude. They also condemn it and urge its discontinuation. Condemnation is evident in the repetition noted in these signs, their rhythm and meter. *And you consume the inheritance, a greedy consuming, and you love wealth with an ardent cherishing.* (89:19-89:20)

THE FATEFUL DAY

Once their erroneous concept of the trial with wealth and poverty is outlined, and their vile attitude is exposed there follows a stern warning about the Day of Judgment which comes after the result of the test is known. Here the rhythm is very powerful: (89:21-89:26)

It is a tender, compassionate and reassuring address: *O soul, one that is at peace!* (89:27) It speaks of freedom and ease, after the earlier reference to chains and affliction: *Return to your Lord, one that is wellpleasing. well-pleased:* (89:28) After your alienation on earth and your separation from the one you belong to, *return now to your Lord* with whom you have strong ties: *Well pleased, well pleasing: Return to your Lord, one that is well-pleasing, well-pleased:* (89:28) It is a gentle address that spreads compassion and satisfaction.

The believer's soul is at peace with its Lord, certain of its way, confident of its fate. It is a soul satisfied in all eventualities, happiness or affliction, wealth or poverty. It entertains no doubts; it is free from transgressions.The gentle music adds a feeling of intimacy and peace. The majestic face of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful, with all His splendor looks on from above. *Enter you among My servants and you enter My Garden!* (89:29-89:30)

Summary of Quranic Signs 89:1-89:30

Who is God?

In this section, the people hear God swearing an oath by the dawn and the nights, by the odd number and the even. It then presents a rhetorical question: Will one who has intelligence not understand the meaning of these oaths and the truth of them? On the day of the Upheaval, He will punish those who did not heed the Prophet's warning and He will bind and restrain them.

How are the signs directed towards Prophet Muhammad?

When the Upheaval comes, the Prophet's Lord will draw near with the angels and hell will be brought about. Muhammad will return to His Lord well-pleasing, well-pleased and he receives the commands: *Return* and *Enter*: enter among God's servants, enter God's Garden, Paradise.

How are the signs directed towards the Community?

That Day those who have not heeded the words of the Quranic message will recollect and ask themselves: Why did I not put forward from this life for the world to come?

The early believers hear: When God honors them and praises them, they acknowledge His existence and His presence, but when He tests them, they feel despair. Why would this feeling arise in some of them? Have they not honored the orphan and encouraged one another to feed the poor? Have they consumed the inheritance of an orphan greedily as if it belonged to them because they love wealth? The soul of those who continue to praise God, even when being tested, of those who honor the orphan and feed the hungry, of those who love God and humanity more than wealth, will be at peace.

Students Summarize a Sign

Choose a particular sign *(ayah)* and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

Questions to Ask the Students

Could you be more specific in explaining what these signs mean to you?
Could you give more details about your understanding?
Could you be more precise?
How would you answer the Quranic questions: *Is there not in that an oath to be sworn for a possessor of intelligence?*(89:5) *And how will the reminder be for him?* (89:23)

Student Assessment

How would your rate yourself! Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not de-

veloped any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I realized that the Quranic message contains some signs that are precise.
I looked for interconnections between these various Quranic signs.
I realized the interconnectedness of ideas in these signs.
I did not memorize the signs and repeat them like a parrot does, but I studied them as a detective would, relating new things I learned to things that I previously knew.

Lesson 11. Critical Thinking Strategy
Reading Critically: Clarifying or Discerning the Sacred Text

Critical thinkers read with a healthy skepticism. But they do not doubt or deny until they understand. They clarify before they judge. They expect intelligibility from what they read. Critical readers ask themselves questions as they read, wonder about the implications of, reasons for, examples of, and meaning of the sacred text. They do not approach written material as a collection of sentences, but as a whole, trying out various interpretations until one fits all of the sign or signs, rather than ignoring or distorting statements that don't fit their interpretation.

> According to al-Ghazzali, our beliefs arise from our intellect (*aql*). According to traditional sources, thought is the power of the mind (heart) that facilitates knowledge. Based on this definition, thinking: is the movement of that power that is driven by the intellect. It can only occur when an initial image of the subject is attainable in the mind of the thinker.
>
> Further, the Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the sacred text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge espoused with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression understands the religion, signifying a rational and inquisitive approach to constructing a worldview of the Quranic message. In other words, the Quranic message advises analytical knowledge and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely dogmatic approach. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions faith based on detailed analysis as opposed to undigested and uncomprehended faith. The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the clerics of all the leading schools of thought....
>
> Thus, if there are hadith reports, or any factual reports for that matter, which do not stand to reason and understanding, they would be most likely discounted and abandoned, with the exception only of devotional matters (*ibadat*) which are based on faith and submission more than on rational analysis....
>
> Another feature of the Quranic vision of thinking is indicated in its emphasis on wisdom and good judgment (*hikmah*) which signifies the quality of thinking, its regard for values, and its outcome. Wisdom and good judgment can easily be said to be more important than technical know-how and expertise, as it can guide expert knowledge

as to its proper application and the attainment of excellence.

The Quran mentions *hikmah* twenty times, and in about ten of these it is immediately preceded by the word *kitab*, which is a reference to divine scripture—primarily the Quran, but also other divinely revealed scriptures. The text thus says with reference to Jesus that God Most High will teach him the Scripture and wisdom (*hikmah*), the Torah and the Gospel....

The juxtaposition of Book and wisdom is often contextualized by a reference to the sending of Prophets who teach the people and guide them with scripture and wisdom as it is said of the Prophet Muhammad (as well as) ... the descendants of Prophet Abraham.

The holistic, superior, and indivisible value of *hikmah* in the Quran is underscored in one of its signs to the effect that when God bestows wisdom on someone that person is indeed granted an immense source of goodness.... To mention wisdom together with the Book evidently means that the Quran should be read with wisdom and divorcing the one from the other by taking a totally dogmatic approach to the Quran goes against the divine purpose and intention of its revelation. To read the Quran in the light of wisdom thus means a comprehensive reading that reaches beyond the obvious meaning of its words to encapsulate the goal and purpose of its message and then also reflection on the ways and means of how its benefits can be realized for the individual and society.[20]

Quranic Chapter 93: The Forenoon (al-Duha)
Signs 93:1-93:11

Makkah: *By the forenoon* (93:1)
and by the night when it brooded, (93:2)
your Lord deserted you not, nor is He in hatred of you. (93:3)
Truly, the last will be better for you
than the first. (93:4)
And your Lord will give to you.
Then, you will be well-pleased. (93:5)
Found He you not an orphan and He gave you refuge? (93:6)
And found He you one who goes astray,
then, He guided you? (93:7)
And He found you one who wants, then, He enriched you? (93:8)
So as for the orphan, oppress him not. (93:9)
And as for one who begs, scold him not. (93:10)
And as for the divine blessing of your Lord, divulge it! (93:11)

COMMENTARY°

Chapter 93 was revealed and it came as a river of compassion, mercy, hope, comfort and reassurance. (93:3-8) Do you not see the proof of all this in your own life? Do you not feel it in your heart? Do you not observe it in your world? (93:3) Never was His mercy taken away from you and nor will it be. Surely the life to come will be better for you than this present life: (93:4) And there will be much more: And, certainly, in time your Lord will be bounteous to you and you will be well pleased: (93:5)

This statement is given in the framework of a universal phenomenon: *By the forenoon and by the night when it brooded,* (93:1-93:2) The expression spreads an air of affection, kindliness and complete satisfaction: (93:3-93:8) Such tenderness, mercy, satisfaction and solace are all felt in the sweet and soothing words which softly thread along the chapter echoing the morning hours and still night, the times most conducive to clarity. During these periods one's reflections flow like a stream, and the human soul is best able to communicate with the universe and its Creator. The scene drawn here is one of perfect beauty. Such perfection is divine, unparalleled and inimitable.

God takes the opportunity of mentioning the Prophet's earlier orphanhood, error and poverty in order to instruct him, and all Muslims, to protect every orphan, be charitable to every beggar, and to speak of the great favors God has bestowed on them. The first and most important of these is having been guided to the Quranic message: (93:9- 93:11)

As we have frequently mentioned, these instructions reflect the needs of the day, in that greedy and materialistic society in which the weak, who could not defend their own rights, were not catered for. The Quran was revealed to reform that society with God's laws which establish equity, justice and goodwill. Speaking of God's bounties, especially those of guidance and faith, expresses gratitude to Him who has given us all that we have. It is the recipient's practical manifestation of thanks.

The chapter is dedicated in its entirety to the Prophet. It isa message from his Lord which touches his heart with pleasure, joy, tranquillity and contentment. All-in-all, it proffers mercy and compassion to his restless soul and suffering heart.

SUMMARY OF QURANIC SIGNS 93:1-93:11

WHO IS GOD?

God swears an oath by the forenoon and by the night when it covers with darkness. events that those who see it can accept as the Truth. It is God who

created the forenoon and causes the night to bring darkness.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

Most of the passage relates directly to Muhammad as the revelation uses the second person singular pronoun. God has not deserted him nor does God hate him and the last will be better for him than the first. His Lord will give to him so that Muhammad will be well-pleased. The Quranic message then asks him: Did God not find that you an orphan and He gave you refuge? Did He not find you one who goes astray and guided you? Did He not find Muhammad in need and He enriched him? Now, as a result Muhammad is commanded to divulge, disclose, proclaim, broadcast the Word of the divine blessing of his Lord.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

As God in truth has supported and protected Muhammad, so the rest of humanity must not oppress the orphan nor scold the beggar.

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN

Choose a particular sign *(ayah)* and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS

What does this passage say? What does it imply?
Assume? Is it clear? Explain it.
Does it contradict anything you know or suspect to be true?
How do you know?
How could you find out?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I realized the truth in the Quranic questions in this section:
The Prophet was an orphan and God gave him refuge with his grandfather and later his paternal uncle.
The Prophet was looking for answers to the injustices he saw in the tribal society into which he was born and God guided him.
The Prophet had been in a state of spiritual need and the Quran enriched him with its message of compassion, mercy and justice.

LESSON 12. CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
RAISING QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, ISSUES

The Quranic text asks hundreds of questions in reasoning something out. which the Quranic message itself implies. One of the best ways to become critical thinkers is to understand how the Quran raises questions.

QURANIC CHAPTER 94: THE EXPANSION (AL-INSHIRAH)
SIGNS 94:1-94:8

Makkah: *Expand We not your breast* (94:1)
and lifted from you the heavy loaded burden, (94:2)
that weighed heavily on your back? (94:3)
Exalted We not your remembrance? (94:4)
So, truly, with hardship, ease. (94:5)
Truly, with hardship, ease. (94:6)
When you had finished your duties,
then, work on supplication, (94:7)
and quest your Lord. (94:8)

COMMENTARY°

Here the feelings of sympathy and an atmosphere of delightful, friendly discourse abound. It portrays the divine care Muhammad enjoys and explains the measures taken out of concern for him. The chapter also gives the good news of forthcoming relief, points out to Muhammad the secret of ease, and emphasizes his strong ties with God.

These signs: *Expand We not your breast and lifted from you the heavy loaded burden, that weighed heavily on your back? Exalted We not your remembrance?* suggest that Muhammad is troubled for some reason concerning the message with which he had been entrusted and the obstacles in its way. These signs also suggest that the difficulties facing his mission weighed heavily on his heart, making him feel the need for help and backing. Therefore, this comforting address.

And lifted from you the heavy loaded burden, that weighed heavily on your back? (94:2-94:3) that it almost broke your back, but We relieved you of that. Relief took the form of giving your heart a lift so that you might feel your mission easier and your burden not so hard to shoulder. Do you not feel it to be lighter after We opened up your heart? *Exalted We not your remembrance?* (94:4) God addresses His beloved Messenger kindly. He comforts and reassures him, explaining to him how He has given him unceasing ease: *So, truly, with hardship, ease. Truly. with hardship, ease.* (94:5- 94:6)

Summary of Quranic Signs 94:1-94:8

How are the signs directed towards Prophet Muhammad?

These signs (94:1-94:8) refer directly to Muhammad and offer him comfort and reassurance. The signs begin with the question: Have We not opened up your spiritual heart, lifted from you the heavy burden that rested upon you by raising high your reputation among the people? Did We not exalt your remembrance among the people? The message then repeats twice for emphasis that hardship is followed by ease. It commands Muhammad, when he has finished his work, to trun his attention to his Lord, seeking the long and arduous search for his Lord.

Students Summarize a Sign

Choose a particular sign *(ayah)* and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

Students Ask Themselves

What is the key question in this Quranic message?
How does the Quranic message reply to its own question?
Details are very important. Who are ones who deny this way of life?

Critical thinkers learn to be skilled at analyzing questions to determine what, precisely, it is asking and how to go about rationally responding to it.

Reminder to Students Regarding Questioning the Above Sign.

What are the questions we are asked?
What are the questions we are not asked?
What questions did you ask?
Should you have asked?

Student Assessment

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to:
Formulate a question in a clear and relevant way
Choose from among alternative expressions
Discuss the advantages of different types of the question at issue

Lesson 13. Critical Thinking Strategy
Questioning Deeply: Raising and Pursuing Significant Questions•

When reading a sign (verse, *ayah),* critical thinkers look for the issues that underlie the claims that are expressed. They come to their own understanding of the details. They then place this in a huger context. They move between the basic underlying issues and the larger picture of the issue at hand They remain focused on the issue as they follow a line of thought. They organize the issues in their own way as they continue to raise questions about the issue as they increase their knowledge through Quranic signs such as 103:1-103:3.

Quranic Chapter 103: By Time (al-Asr)
Signs 103:1-103:3

Makkah: *By time through the ages,* (103:1)
truly, the human being is, surely. in a loss (103:2)
but those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality,
and counseled one another to The Truth,
and counseled one another to having patience. (103:3)

Commentary°

This very short chapter outlines a complete system for human life based on the Quranic viewpoint. It defines, in the clearest and most concise form, the basic concept of faith in the context of its comprehensive reality. In a few words the whole Quranic constitution is covered and in fact, the Community is described in its essential qualities and message in one sign only, the last. Such is the clear and most expressive style of which only God is capable.

Whenever two Companions of God's Messenger were about to depart from each other, they would recite this chapter, after which they would shake hands. This was indicative of a pledge to accept this doctrine fully, to preserve this faith, piety and a willingness to counsel each other to follow the truth and to persevere in the face of adversity. It was a mutual compact to remain good elements in a Quranic society established according to that doctrine and to preserve the foundation of this society.[21]

Summary of Quranic Signs 103:1-103:3

Who is God?

God swears an oath by time as it has appeared through the ages.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

Human beings are at a loss except those who believe. A sign of them being believers is that they act in accordance with morality and counsel one another to patience.

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN

Choose a particular sign *(ayah)* and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

QUESTIONS FOR CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

Seek Quranic examples and analogies to these signs.
Seek to distinguish what one knows from what one merely assumes.
Seek to enter empathetically into the perspectives of those who are unjust to themselves.
Be on the alert for inconsistencies, vagueness and other possible problems in thought in your classroom discussions.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself! Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I routinely ask questions to fill in the missing pieces in my learning.
I was able to elaborate further on this in the classroom.
I was able to give an example of this in our classroom discussion.
I am beginning to be able to connect what I am learning to my life.

Lesson 14. Critical Thinking Strategy
Practicing Discussion: Clarifying and Questioning Interpretations•

Quranic critical thinkers are never without questions to ask as the Quranic continuously ask. It is through exploring questions that the sacred text is able to clarify interpretations. Through their questioning, students explore the basic ideas. Going beyond what things appear to be, they not only study Quranic questions, but are able to ask many more themselves.

Quranic Chapter 100: The Chargers (al-Adiyat)
Signs 100:1-100:11

Makkah: *By the chargers, panting,* (100:1)
by ones who strike a fire, striking fire, (100:2)
by the ones who are raiders in the morning, (100:3)
then, they plowed it to a trail of dust, (100:4)
and they penetrated the center with it, a multitude. (100:5)
Truly, the human being is unthankful to his Lord. (100:6)
And, truly, he is a witness to that. (100:7)
And he is more severe in the cherishing of good. (100:8)
Knows he not that when all that is in the graves
will be scattered about (100:9)
and will be shown forth what is in the breasts? (100:10)
Truly, their Lord on that Day is Aware of them. (100:11)

Commentary°

The Rhythm of the Signs

This chapter is presented in rapid and violent strokes. The text moves swiftly from one scene to another. As we come to the last sign, everything—the verbal expressions, connotations, subject matter and rhythm-settle down in a manner similar to that of a swift horse reaching the finishing line.

The chapter begins with a scene of war steeds running, snorting, striking sparks of tire with their hoofs, launching a raid at dawn and blazing a trail of dust. cleaving suddenly into the center of the enemies' camp, taking them by surprise and striking terror and fear in their hearts.

Then follows a picture of the human soul: A scene of ingratitude, ignobleness, greed and extreme miserliness. Immediately after that there is a description of graves laid open and their contents scattered, and the secrets of hearts poured out. Finally the trail of dust, ingratitude and miserliness, the contents of graves and

dragged out secrets all come to the same end. They come to God and settle down: *Truly, their lord on that Day is Aware of them.* (100:11)

The rhythm of the chapter is robust and thunderous, and thus sits well with the dusty and clamorous atmosphere generated by the upturned graves and the secrets violently pulled out of people's breasts. These characteristics of the rhythm are also appropriate to the picture of ingratitude, thanklessness and extreme miserliness. The framework for this picture is provided by a dusty and tumultuous stampede of horses racing and thundering. Thus the frame and the picture are in perfect harmony with each other.

The final touch in the chapter provides the cure for ingratitude, greed and miserliness. It portrays the scene of resurrection in a way that makes a person shudder, and puts his love for wealth and indulgence in worldly riches out of his mind, unshackling his soul and setting it free from earthly attachments: (100:9-100:11)

It is a violent and frightening scene in which we witness the scattering about of the contents of the graves and the bringing out of closely-guarded secrets. The Arabic terms used here for scattering and pulling are very forceful, suggesting an atmosphere of violence and force.

Does he not know what happens when this will take place? Mere awareness of all this is enough to inspire a person to seek an answer and explore every avenue in search of it. For it finally rests where every matter and destiny is settled: *Truly, their Lord on that Day is Aware of them.* (100:11)

So to their Lord is their end. On that day He shows that He knows them and all their affairs and secrets. God certainly knows everything at all times and in all conditions, but knowledge of "that day" has the effect of drawing their attention. It is a knowledge which necessitates reckoning and reward. This implicit meaning is the one underlined here. All in all this chapter is a swift, vehement and breathless piece, with a sudden end of meaning, expression and rhythm all at the same time.

SUMMARY OF QURANIC SIGNS 100:1-100:11

WHO IS GOD?

God swears an oath by horses at war, running, snorting, striking sparks of fire with their hoofs, launching raids at dawn, blazing a trail of dust, arriving suddenly in the center of an enemy's camp, striking them with terror and fear.

How are the signs directed to the Community?

Those who hear this are warned that they can be ungrateful to their Lord. As they are intense lovers of what they see as good-wealth and material things—they themselves will bear witness to their ingratitude. Do they not realize and recall that whatever remains of us in our graves will be scattered about? What they have done in their lives will be shown forth. Their Lord will be aware of all.

Students Summarize a Sign

Choose a particular sign *(ayah)* and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

Questions to Ask Students•

What does this passage say? What does it imply?
Assume? Is it clear? Explain it.
Does it contradict anything you know or suspect to be true?
How do you know?
How could you find out?
Does this fit in with your experience? In what way?

Student Assessment

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I learned to question my interpretation of a situation.
I listened to the Arabic recitation of this chapter and heard the rhythm described by the commentator.

LESSON 15. CRITICAL MORAL TRAIT

GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (*TAQWA*)•

The God-consciousness practiced by the Prophet is the whole pursuit of a person's principles or standards of behavior, judgment of what is important in life, moral code, code of behavior and avoidance of the unethical in general. It is designated by the Quran as *taqwa*. It is dependent on and is the result of faith in God: *O humanity! Worship your Lord Who created you and those who were before you so that perhaps you will be God-conscious.* (2:21)

The Quran is revealed to produce this attitude of God-consciousness among people: *an Arabic Recitation without any crookedness so that perhaps they would be God-conscious.* (39:28) It is the presence of this moral attitude which saves people from destruction[22] and it is this which helps them maintain God's commands in their conjugal life,[23•] in sacrifice,[24] in different aspects of social life,[25] and in fulfilling faithfully their social obligations.

To be God-conscious *(muttaqi)* is to believe in God, and the Last Day, and the angels, and the Books, and the Messengers. Proof of belief in the One God is in one's actions, behavior or practicing of this belief which includes, among other practices: The practice of good deeds: to spend out of one's substance, out of love for God, for kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, for the ransom of prisoners-of-war; to be steadfast in formal prayers, and to pay the purifying alms *(zakat);* to fulfil the contracts which have been made; and to be firm and patient in pain (or suffering), adversity, and times of danger. Such people as follow these are possessed of true God-consciousness.

The better and more lasting reward of the Lord is for those who believe and put their trust in Him; those who avoid the greater crimes and shameful deeds, and, even when they are angry, they forgive; those who hearken to their Lord, and establish regular formal prayer; who conduct their affairs by mutual consultation; who spend out of what God bestows on them for sustenance; who, when an oppressive wrong is inflicted on them, (are not cowed but) help and defend themselves; and those who recompense injury with injury in degree equal thereto and, better still, forgive and make reconciliation. But indeed if any do help and defend themselves after a wrong is done to them, against such there is no cause of blame. The blame is only against those who oppress people with wrongdoing and insolently transgress beyond bounds through the land, defying right and justice; for such there will be a grievous penalty. But indeed showing patience and forgiveness is an exercise of courageous will and resolution in the conduct of affairs. God-consciousness results in developing a sense of humility. Critical thinkers recognize that there is a limit of their knowledge. They are sensitive to their being self-centered and egocentric as they know that this will only increase their self-deception.They are aware of bias and prejudice

in their views. The basis of humility is to be able to avoid claiming to know more than they actually know.

The presence of humility implies a lack of arrogance, conceit or pretentiousness as well as implying that we have insight into the basis for our beliefs. Students learn to know what evidence they have, how they came to believe something and what additional evidence they would need. This indicates that as Quranic critical thinkers they know what they know as well as what they do not know.

Humility is suspending judgment and having a consciousness of the limits of one's knowledge, including a sensitivity to circumstances in which one's native egocentrism is likely to function self-deceptively; sensitivity to bias, prejudice, and limitations of one's viewpoint. Humility depends on recognizing that one should not claim more than one actually knows. It does not imply spinelessness or submissiveness. It implies the lack of intellectual pretentiousness, boastfulness, or conceit, combined with insight into the logical foundations, or lack of such foundations, of one's beliefs.

And of the servants of God the most gracious are those who walk on the earth in humility, and when the ignorant address them, they say, *'Peace';* those who spend the night in adoration of their Lord prostrating and standing; those who, when they spend, are not extravagant nor miserly, but hold a just balance between these two extremes; those who invoke not, with God, any other god, nor slay such life as God has made sacred, except for just cause, nor commit fornication; those who witness no falsehood, and, if they pass by futility, they pass by it with honorable avoidance; those who, when they are admonished with the signs of their Lord, do not show indifference to them like the deaf or the blind; and those who pray: Our Lord! give us the grace to lead the God-conscious.[26]

In the Quranic context, humility is fostered through the concept of repentance. Though the human being is by nature after the pattern of God's nature[27] and, therefore, capable of approximating to the ideal embodied in the most beautiful names,[28] yet being prone to different weaknesses[29] he is often led to wrong his soul in spite of his best efforts to follow moral discipline.[30]

Quranic Chapter 108: The Abundance (al-Kawthar)

Signs 108:1-108:3

Makkah: *Truly, We gave you the abundance.* (108:1)
So invoke blessings for your Lord and make sacrifice. (108:2)
Truly, the one who detests you,
he is the one who is cut off. (108:3)

COMMENTARY°

This chapter exclusively concerns Muhammad, seeking to cheer him up and assure him of happier prospects in his struggle. In it God threatens his enemies with destruction while directing Muhammad to the path of giving thanks.

The chapter represents a glimpse of Muhammad's life and the course of his mission at the beginning of the revelation at Makkah. It deals with the plots and insults directed and to be continued to be directed against Muhammad and the divine message he conveys. The chapter is an example of God's protection of His servant, Muhammad, and the few who followed him and believed in God. It is an instance of God's direct support to the believers in their struggle, supplying them with fortitude, restraint and promise, while threatening a terrible fate on their antagonists.

In this way, the chapter symbolizes the reality of guidance, goodness and faith on the one hand and that of error, evil and disbelief on the other; the former category is one of abundance, profusion and expansive goodness, the latter one of scantiness, shrinking resources and annihilation.

Among the people of the ungrateful, the Arab tribe which controlled Makkah, there are some impudent folk who view Muhammad and his mission with no small degree of antagonism. They say about Muhammad that he is a man with no posterity, referring to the early death of his son. One of them once remarked: Do not be bothered with him; he will die without descendants and that will be the end of his mission.

Such a trivial and cunning taunt has a wide impact on the Arab society of the time, which set great store by sons. Such taunting delights Muhammad's enemies and undoubtedly this is a source of depression and irritation to his noble heart. This chapter is therefore revealed to comfort Muhammad and assure him of the abiding and profuse goodness which God has chosen for him and of the deprivation and loss awaiting his persecutors.

This chapter forecasts the great abundances to be given to the Prophet. The chapter does not give it a specific definition of the word abundance (*kawthar*). Several accounts relate that *al-kawthar* is a river in heaven granted to Muhammad. However, Ibn Abbas, Muhammad's learned cousin, contends that the river is but one part of the abundance which God has furnished for His Messenger. Keeping the circumstances and the whole context in mind, Ibn Abbas's view is the more valid.[11]

Summary of Quranic Signs 108:1-108:3

How are the signs directed towards Prophet Muhammad?

Signs 108:1-108:3 are directed to the Prophet. God promises him abundance. He is commanded to continue to invoke blessings for his Lord and make sacrifice. Muhammad is reassured that it is his enemies who will be cut off and humiliated.

Students Summarize a Sign

Choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

Questions to Ask Students•

What exactly is the question I am trying to ask?
How does it relate to my goals, purposes, and needs?

1. Wherever possible take questions one by one. State the question as clearly and precisely as you can.

2. Study the question to make clear the kind of question you are dealing with. Figure out, for example, what sorts of things you are going to have to do to answer it. Distinguish questions over which you have some control from questions over which you have no control. Set aside the questions over which you have no control, concentrating your efforts on those questions you can potentially answer.

3. Figure out the information you need and actively seek that information.

4. Carefully analyze and interpret the information you collect, drawing what reasonable inferences you can.

5. Figure out your options for action. What can you do in the short term? In the long term? Distinguish questions under your control from questions beyond your control. Recognize explicitly your limitations as far as money, time, and power.

6. Evaluate your options, taking into account your advantages and disadvantages in the situation you are in.

7. Adopt a strategic approach to the question and follow through on that strategy. This may involve direct action or a carefully thought-through wait-and-see strategy.

8. When you act, monitor the implications of your action as you begin to emerge. Be ready at a moment's notice to revise your strategy if the situation requires it. Be prepared to shift your strategy or your analysis or question, or all three, as more information about the question becomes available to you.

What am I sure of?
What questions do I have?
What must I qualify?
How can I divide my ideas into intelligible parts?
What are the relationships between the pans?
How can I show those relationships?
How does this detail fit in?
How does that claim illuminate my main point?
What form of expression best gets this idea across?
Would the reader accept this?
What questions would the reader have?

Student Assessment

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson. you will improve these abilities:

I was able to study and learn skills that I had not been good at from a careful reading of how to formulate and answer questions.
I practice these skills whenever possible.
I am able to recognize and correct my weaknesses because I know this is a sign of gaining strong thinking skills.

Lesson 16. Critical Thinking Strategy

Appropriateness (to be relevant)•

Relevance means bearing upon or relating to the matter at hand, that is understanding the Quranic message. It implies a close logical relationship with, and importance to what the Quran is revealing. Its relevance and validity of information helps in structuring problems and solving them. The relevance of the Quran's message has been clear for over 1400 years as it is the model which the believers follow.

It is not the effort that a student puts into this Quranic Studies that is evaluated, but the quality of their learning. Quranic relevance connects to its teaching students how to think. Once students have assessed the issues, concepts and information relevant tothe particular sign or signs, their thinking will be focused on the task, question or problem related from the sign or signs.

The Quranic message conforms to the principles of good reasoning. It is sensible and teaches good judgment through its consistent, logical, complete and relevant arguments on issues that are important to human life. Being sensitive with an ability to judge relevance is only developed with continuous practice, practice in distinguishing the relevant from the irrelevant, by evaluating relevance and by arguing for and against the relevance of facts.

Quranic Chapter 102: The Rivalry (al-Takathur)

Signs 102:1-102:8

Makkah: *Rivalry diverted you* (102:1)
until you stopped by the cemetery. (102:2)
No indeed! You will know! (102:3)
Again, no indeed! You will know! (102:4)
No indeed! If you will know
with the knowledge of certainty, (102:5)
you will, certainly, see hellfire. (102:6)
Again, you will see it with the eye of certainty. (102:7)
Again, you will, certainly, be asked on that day about the bliss. (102:8)

Commentary°

Rhythm of the Signs

This chapter has a rhythm that is both majestic and awe-inspiring; as if it were the voice of a warner standing on a high place, projecting his voice as it rings out in weighty emphasis. He calls out to people who are drowsy, drunken, confused. They approach a precipice with their eyes closed and their feelings numbed. So the warner increases the volume of his voice to the limit: *Rivalry diverted youl until you stopped by the cemetery.* (102:1-102:2)

Rivalry

With a deep and grave rhythm the chapter then strikes their hearts with the terror awaiting them after they are left in their graves: *No indeed! You will know!* (102:3) Then it repeats the same note, employing the same words and the same firm and terrifying rhythm: *Again, no indeed! You will know!* (102:4) Then it adds to the depth and awe of this assurance, and hints at the grave prospect that lies beyond, the terrifying essence of which they do not recognize in their flush of intoxication and rivalry for worldly riches: *No indeed! If you will know with the knowledge of certainty.* (102:5)

The conditional sentence is not completed in the text. This is acceptable as a refined form of Arabic. It adds to the feeling of awe generated by the chapter. The inference here is that had they known what they should know for certain, they would not have indulged in such rivalry for petty gain. The chapter then discloses the fearful fact which has been withheld: *It is the fire of God, that which is kindled eternally.* (102:6)

It then emphasizes this fact and enhances its impact on people's hearts: *Again, you will see it with the eye of certainty.* (102:7) Finally, it puts the last statement which makes the drunkard sober, the lethargic conscious, the confused attentive and the self-indulgent tremble and feel apprehension at his indulgence in comfort and pleasure: *Again, you will, certainly, be asked on that day about the bliss.* (102:8)

Summary of Quranic Signs 102:1-102:8

How are the signs directed towards the community?

Addressing the ungrateful in Makkah who are ridiculing and taunting Muhammad, their rivalry with the Word of God has diverted them. They will lose their sense of rivalry when they visit the cemetery. The signs then repeat twice: Then they will know, and, then, they will know for certainty because they will see the hellfire to which they are headed. On that Day they will be asked how they used the pleasures of this worldly life in which they engaged.

Students Summarize a Sign

Choose a particular sign *(ayah)* and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

Questions to Ask Students

Is the Quranic message in a position to know?

What subjects or perspectives, what kinds of details,

what sorts of analyses would someone need knowledge of in order to develop a complete and fair-minded view of the Quran?

How is what you are saying relevant to the Quranic signs here?

How does what you are saying bear on the question?

How does what you are saying help us with the issue of relevance?

I don't see how what you said bears on the question. Could you show me how it is relevant?

Could you explain the connection between your question and the question we are addressing?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I understood how to relate what I was saying to the question at hand.

I did not have a problem sticking to the issue of relevance.

I was able to distinguish information that related to the problem of relevance from information that did not relate to it.

LESSON 17. CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY

REASONING DIALOGICALLY: COMPARING INTERPRETATIONS•

Reasoning dialogically means using a thinking that involves a dialogue between different points of view as the Quranic example below shows. Deeply explore the connections to the ideas expressed in these Quranic signs. Be guided to first engaging in an exploratory dialogue where you study the ideas, explore the roots of these ideas, consider the evidence of the subject matter testing the ideas as you move between multiple points of view. Engage in an inward dialogue with yourselves or an outward one with other students. Learn how to integrate the Quranic critical thinking skills with your dialogue.

QURANIC CHAPTER 107: SMALL KINDNESSES (AL-MAUN)

SIGNS 107:1-107:7

Makkah: *Had you considered one who denies this way of life?* (107:1)
And that is he who drives away with force the orphan (107:2)
and urges not to give food to the needy. (107:3)
So woe to ones who formally pray. (107:4)
ones who are inattentive to their formal prayers, (107:S)
those who make display. (107:6)
yet they repulse giving the assistance. (107:7)

COMMENTARY°

This chapter of seven short signs tackles an important and vital issue which could very well change the common meanings normally assigned to the terms faith (*iman*), and ingratitude (*kufr*). Moreover. it brings out the fundamental truth intrinsic in the nature of the faith, the enormous benefit it offers to all humanity and the abundant blessings with which God favored humanity when He sent them His last message.

The signs: *Had you considered one who denies this way of life?* (107:1) begins with a question addressed to all who can see, generating suspense and holding their attention in order to make them discover the target and subject of the chapter. Who is this creature identified by the Quran as the one who denies the Quranic message? The answer is given immediately: *And that is he who drives away with force the orphan and urges not to give food to the needy.* (107:2-107:3)

This definition of ungrateful may sound surprising when compared with a traditional definition of faith, but this is the crux of the matter. Indeed the one who denies the faith is he who harshly pushes

away the orphan, humiliating him and hurting his feelings, and who does not care for the needy or their welfare.

For if the truth of the Quranic message has touched his heart in any degree, he would not commit such acts. True belief in the Quranic message is not a verbal statement, but an overall change of the individual's heart, motivating him to benevolence and goodwill for all his fellow beings that are in need of his care and protection. God does not want mere words from His servants but demands deeds to support the spoken words which, otherwise, are as weightless and valueless as blown ash. Nothing can be more forceful than these three signs in affirming this fact which represents the nature of faith.

Next, God offers a practical illustration of what is meant above: *So woe to ones who formally pray, ones who are inattentive to their formal prayers.* (107:4-107:5) These signs contain God's invocation against, or a threat of destruction to, those who offer formal prayers but are careless about them. Who exactly are such people? *Those who make display, yet they repulse giving the* assistance.(107:6-107:7)

There is a report from one commentator that this chapter is revealed about al-As ibn Wail al-Sahmi.[32] Another states: Abu Sufyan ibn Harb was in the habit of slaughtering two camels every week. On one occasion, an orphan came to him asking him for something. Abu Sufyan responded by hitting him with a stick. So this chapter was revealed. The chapter is one interwoven entity, aiming at the establishment of one of the most fundamental aspects of faith. It relates to the phenomena of hypocrisy and false pretenses which were previously unexposed among the Muslim community in Makkah.

SUMMARY OF QURANIC SIGNS 107:1-107:7

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

Muhammad is asked to consider the fate of those ungrateful who deny the way of life that he is proclaiming to them. It is the one who denies the message who drives the orphan away with force and who does not urge food for the needy. Then, the signs refer to those who may have accepted the message, but who are hypocritical because they offer the formal prayer, but their intention in doing do is to show off. Another of their signs is that they do not offer assistance to the poor and needy.

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN

Choose a particular sign (ayah) and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS

What would someone who disagreed say?
Why? How could the first respond? Why?

List points from multiple perspectives for reference, then write dialogues of people arguing about the issues as the dialogue between Pharaoh and Moses:

*Pharaoh said: Did we not raise you up among us as a child? Had you not lingered in expectation with us for many years of **your** lifetime?* (26:18) *And you had accomplished **your** accomplishment that you had accomplished and you are among the ones who are ungrateful.* (26:19)

Moses said: I accomplished it when I was of the ones who go astray. (26:20) *So I ran away from you when I feared you. Then, my Lord bestowed on me critical judgment and made me among the ones who are sent.* (26:21) *Beyond this past favor with which you reproach me, you enslaved the Children of Jacob (Israel).* (26:22)

Pharaoh said: What is the Lord of the worlds? (26:23)

Moses said: The Lord of the heavens and the earth and whatever is between the two of them if you had been ones who are certain. (26:24)

Pharaoh said to whoever was around him: listen you not! (26:25)

Moses said: Your lord and the Lord of your fathers, the ancient ones.(26:26)

Pharaoh said: Truly, your Messenger who was sent to you is one who is possessed! (26:27)

Moses said: The Lord of the East and the West and whatever is between the two of them if you had been reasonable! (26:28)

Pharaoh said: If you took to yourself a god other than me. I will, certainly assign you to be imprisoned! (26:29)

Moses said: What if I drew near you with something that makes it clear? (26:30)

Pharaoh said: Bring it, if you are among the ones who are sincere. (26:31)

So he cast his staff; that is when it was a clear serpent. (26:32) *He drew out his hand and that is when it was shimmering white to the ones who look.* (26:33)

QUESTIONS ABOUT OTHER VIEWS (PHARAOH AND MOSES)•

What did the other (group of people) think? Why? (Take specific statements from the Quranic signs here.)
Would others see it this way?

Would they use these words?
How would they describe this? Why?
What exactly do they disagree about? Why?
What does X think is the cause? Y?
Why do they differ?

Class Discussion

The above signs teach dialogical thinking. Have students discuss perspectives in this Quranic message. Such discussion should be integrated with other Quranic signs so that the ideas are synthesized. Rather than separate activities or discussions about different perspectives, you can have students move back and forth between the points of view of Pharaoh and Moses.

Student Assessment

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I routinely ask questions to fill in the missing pieces in my learning.
I was able to elaborate further on this in the classroom.
I was able to give an example of this in our classroom discussion.
I am beginning to be able to connect what I am learning to my life.

LESSON 18: CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY

REASONING DIALECTICALLY: EVALUATING INTERPRETATIONS•

As opposed to dialogical thinking, dialectical thinking is such that it tests the strengths and weaknesses of differing points of view. It puts idea against idea or reasoning against counter-reasoning. The goal is to reach the truth of an issue under discussion. Ideas that are inconsistent with one another are eliminated and reconciled.

In order to develop integrative thinking, you need to learn to evaluate conflicting ideas and determine which are strong and which are weak. As you develop dialectical reasoning skills, your thinking easily moves between different points of view.

QURANIC EXAMPLES

If you are in doubt, ... then,[33]
Do they say ... ? Rather, [34]
Bring forward your witnesses[35]
Bring your proof[36]
Have they not considered?[37]
Let the human being consider ... [38]
Clear Proof *(bayyinatun, nazar)...*[39]

Dialectical thinking is practiced whenever two conflicting points of view, arguments, or conclusions are being discussed as in the case of Pharaoh and Moses or between Abraham and his father that follows:

> *Remember Abraham in the Book. Truly. he had been a just person, a Prophet.* (19:41) *That is when he said to his father: O my father! Why will you worship what hears not, and perceives not, and avails you not anything?* (19:42) *O my father! Truly. I, there drew near me of the knowledge of what approaches you not. So follow me and I will guide you to a path without fault.* (19:43) *O my father! Worship not Satan. Truly. Satan had been rebellious towards The Merciful!* (19:44) *O my father! Truly, I fear that a punishment should afflict you from The Merciful so that you become a protector of Satan.* (19:45)
>
> *He* (Abraham's father) *said: Are you one who shrinks from my gods, O Abraham? If you will not refrain yourself, certainly, I will stone you. so abandon me for some while.* (19:46)
>
> *He* (Abraham) *said: Peace be to you. I will ask for forgiveness from my Lord for you. Truly, He had been One Who is Gracious to me.* (19:47) I *will withdraw from you and what you call to other than God and I will call to my Lord. Perhaps I will not be disappointed in*

my supplication to my Lord. (19:48) *So he withdrew from them and what they worship other than God. We bestowed on him Isaac and Jacob. Each of them We made a Prophet.* (19:49) *We bestowed on them from Our mercy and We assigned them the tongue of lofty sincerity.* (19:50)

Quranic Chapter 109: The Ungrateful (al-Kafirun)

Signs 109:1-109:6

Makkah: *Say: O ones who are ungrateful!* (109:1)
I worship not what you worship, (109:2)
and you are not ones who worship what I worship. (109:3)
And I am not one who worships what you worshipped. (109:4)
And you are not ones who worship what I worship. (109:5)
For you is your way of life, and for me is my way of life. (109:6)

Commentary°

These signs were revealed about a group of people from the ungrateful who said to the Messenger: Come follow our religion and we will follow yours. You worship our idols for a year and we worship your God the following year. In this way, if what you have brought us is better than what we have, we would partake of it and take our share of goodness from it; and if what we have is better than what you have brought, you would partake of it and take your share of goodness from it. He said: God forbid that I associate anything with Him.

Questions to Ask Students

What was Abraham's argument to his father?
Is there another view one could have to object to his reasoning?
What?
And the answer to that objection?
Does Abraham use language appropriately and consistently as he dialogues within his father?
Is the evidence he gives from both sides relevant?
Is it questionable, or acceptable?
Which argument is more trustworthy?
How can we know which of these conflicting assumptions is best?
Is there a way of reconciling these views? The evidence?
What is this side right about?
The other side?

Which of these views is strongest? Why?

Summary of Quranic Signs 109:1-109:6

How are the signs directed towards the community?

The signs I09:1-109:6 are directed at the ungrateful Quraysh who refuse to accept the Quranic message that *there is no god but He.* (73:4) but rather suggest that they will worship no god but He if Muhammad will worship their gods. He is told by the revelation to recite the next signs for them. He then says, drawing a line in the sand: For them is their way of life and for him is his.

Students Summarize a Sign

Choose a particular sign *(ayah)* and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

Questions to Ask Students•

What am I sure of!
What questions do I have?
What must I qualify?
How can I divide my ideas into intelligible parts?
What are the relationships between the parts?
How can I show those relationships?
How does this detail fit in?
How does that claim illuminate my main point?
What form of expression best gets this idea across?
Would the reader accept this?
What questions would the reader have?

Student Assessment

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to practice a dialectical discussion with a friend.
We still disagreed at the end. I said to my friend:
To you is your opinion and to me is mine.

Lesson 19. Critical Thinking Strategy Using Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments•

Any questions students ask require information. There are three aspects to this:

1. Thinking has a goal, agenda, purpose.
2. Questions being asked either explicitly or implicitly.
3. Information is being used.

If students have information, information never uses itself. Information never gives itself meaning. It deduces implications from itself. Information must be treated by the mind. It must be interpreted. Information must be given a meaning. As Quranic critical thinkers students must make certain to distinguish hard data from the inferences or conclusions they draw from them.•

Quranic Chapter 105: The Elephant (al-Fil)

Signs 105:1-105:5

Makkah: *Have you not considered what your Lord accomplished*
with the Companions of the Elephant? (105:1)
Makes He not their cunning leading to nothing? (105:2)
And He sent upon them flocks of birds, (105:3)
throwing at them rocks of baked clay. (105:4)
Then, made He them like ones who are consumed
by stalks of husked grain. (105:5)

Commentary°

The various reports about this incident relate that after the Abyssinians had expelled the Persians from Yemen and established their rule there, the Abyssinian governor of Yemen, Abraha, builds a superbly luxurious church giving it the name of the then Abyssinian Emperor. He does this after he had observed the love and enthusiasm of Yemeni Arabs—the same as those felt all over the Arab land—or the Kabah, the Sacred Mosque at Makkah. His purpose behind building the church is to make the Arabs forsake their attachment to the Mosque at Makkah and turn instead to his new luxurious church.

But the Arabs do not turn away from their historical shrine. They believe themselves to be the descendants of Abraham and Ishmael who built the House, which is the name they often used for the Kabah. For them, this fact is a source of pride in line with their tradition of honoring their forefathers. Vain and hollow as they are, their beliefs were, in their

eyes, better and more profound than those of the people of earlier revelations. They view these religions as contradictory and futile.

As a result, Abraha decides to pull the Kabah down in order to achieve his objective of turning the Arabs away from it He, therefore, marchs at the head of a great army equipped with elephants. At the front is a huge elephant which enjoys special fame among Abraha's men. News of Abraha's march and his objective travels throughout Arab lands giving rise to very strong feelings amongst the Arabs about the destruction of their sacred House.

A nobleman of the royal family of Yemen, called Dhu Nawas, tries to stop the Abyssinian governor, calling on his people and other Arabs to fight Abraha and defend the House. Some Arab tribes join him in a battle against Abraha which Dhu Nawas lost before he is taken prisoner.

Later, while Abraha is on his way, he is intercepted by Natl ibn Habib al-Khathami, who had mobilizes two Arab tribes as well as other Bedouin volunteers, but Abraha again wins the battle and captures Natl. Natl then agrees to act as a guide for Abraha showing him the way.

When the Abyssinian governor approaches Taif, a number of its leaders go to him to say that the House he wants to pull down is in Makkah and not at Taif. They do this in order to prevent him from destroying the house they had built for their idol, al-Lat They also provide him with a guide to show him the way to the Kabah.

Then, on his arrival at al-Mughammas, a valley en route from Taif to Makkah, Abraha dispatchs one of his commanders to Makkah where he loots some belongings of the Quraysh and other Arabs, including 200 camels which belong to Abd al-Muttalib ibn Hashim, the chief of Makkah and the Prophet's grandfather.

The Quraysh, Kinanah, Hudhayl and neighboring Arab tribes then gather together to fight Abraha, but realize that they stand no chance of winning, so they do not proceed any further. Then Abraha sends a messenger to Makkah to meet its chief.

Ibn Ishaq says that Abd al-Muttalib is a most handsome, charming and venerable-looking person. When Abraha sees him, he feels much respect for him. He feels that Abd al-Muttalib is too noble to sit beneath his royal bed, but at the same time he does not wish his officers and troops to see him elevate his guest and sit him on his own couch, so instead he sits with Abd al-Muttalib on the carpet. Then Abraha orders his interpreter to ask his guest what he wants. Abd al-Muttalib says he wants to request the king to give him back his 200 camels which had been looted by his commander. Abraha orders his interpreter to tell Abd al-Muttalib on his behalf: I had admired you when I first saw you but when I speak to you I am disappointed. Do you come

to talk to me about 200 looted camels and forget about the House which is an embodiment of your and your forefathers' religion and which I have come to destroy? You do not even say a word to persuade me to spare it.

Abd al-Muttalib says: I am only the master of my camels, but the House has its own Lord who is sure to protect it. Abraha snaps: It cannot be defended against me. The Makkan chief says: You take your chance! Abraha returns his camels to him.

Abd al-Muttalib goes back to the Quraysh and tells them of his encounter with the Abyssinian commander. He orders them to leave Makkah and seek shelter in the surrounding mountains. Then he accompanies a few Quraysh dignitaries to the Kabah where he holds the ring on its door in his hand. They all pray to God for His help and protection of the House. Abd al-Muttalib is reported to have recited the following lines of poetry in his prayer: Our Lord, a creature protects his property, so protect **Yours.** Let not their cross and their might ever overcome **Your** might. If **You** are leaving them to destroy our House of worship, then You surely have something in mind.

Abraha, on the other hand, orders his army to march with the elephants to complete their mission, but at a short distance from Makkah, their famous, huge elephant sits down and refuses to go any further. The soldiers exert all efforts to persuade the elephant to enter the city, but their attempts are in vain.[40]

Then God's will to destroy the Abyssinian army and its commander is fulfilled. He sends groups of birds to stone the attackers with pebbles of sand and clay, leaving them like dry and torn leaves, as the Quran describes. Abraha suffers physical injuries. The remainder of his army carries him back to Yemen, but his limbs begin to separate from the rest of his body and he starts losing one finger after another, until they arrive at Sanaa. According to various reports, Abraha dies after his chest is cleaved apart.

Versions of this event vary with regard to the description of the bird flocks, their size, the nature of the stones and the manner of their effect. Some accounts add that smallpox and measles broke out in Makkah that year. Those who are inclined to limit the scale of miracles and unfamiliar phenomena, seeking to explain all events as resulting from the operation of natural phenomena that are familiar to us, prefer to explain this event as an actual outbreak of smallpox and measles that afflicted the army. They further explain that the 'birds' could have been flies or mosquitoes carrying germs. The word 'bird' in Arabic refers to whatever flies.

Ikrimah says: It was the first time smallpox had appeared in the Arabia. Yaqub ibn Utbah says: That was the year when measles

and smallpox appeared in Arabia. The diseases had an almost unparalleled effect on their bodies: their flesh began to fall apart. The soldiers and their commander were horror-stricken and ran away. Abraha is also hit. His flesh continues falling off his body, finger by finger, until eventually his chest breaks up and he died at Sanaa.

Students Summarize a Sign

Choose a particular sign *(ayah)* and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

Questions to Ask Students

How can we know whether or not this is true?
What would it be like for this claim to be true?
False?
Do we clearly understand the difference?
What evidence would count for it? Against it?
Are any Quranic concepts (words or phrases) unclear?

Student Assessment

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I realized in reading about Abraha's goal that he had an agenda.
I learned about the difference between Abraha's agenda
and that of the Prophet's grandfather, Abd al-Muttalib.

LESSON 20. CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION: CLARIFYING VALUES AND STANDARDS•

Critical thinkers understand the difference between indicating a preference for something and evaluating something. They are aware of the process and the necessary criteria in order to provide a thoughtful and fair-minded evaluation. They make use of explicit criteria.

They base their judgments on values that they have clarified and understood. When discussing the criteria of the Quranic message, critical Quranic thinkers first both understand the issue in question and the purpose of the evaluation and what function the issue being evaluated is to serve. They do this by taking into consideration various points of view in their evaluation.

The Quranic message understands the important relationship of evidence to belief and so often may qualify its statements accordingly. The tentativeness of many of its signs is characterized by the appropriate use of such qualifiers as: highly likely, probably, not very likely, highly unlikely, often, usually, seldom, I doubt, I suspect, most, many, and some. Critical thinkers are not only clear, but also exact or precise.

What information does the Quran give in this sign?
What information do I need to answer my question?

THE CRITERIA INCLUDE

Clear evidence42
Meditation, pondering, considering43
Recollection44
Reflection *(tafakkur)*45
Taking to heart, taking for granted *(tadhakkur)*46
Convincing proof from reliable and certain premises47
Bringing your proof, showing your evidence48
People of intellect and reflection49
Explaining distinctly50
Being reasonable" Being just and fair51

QURANIC CHAPTER 113: THE DAYBREAK (AL-FALAQ)
SIGNS 113:1-113:5

Makkah: *Say: I take refuge with the Lord of Daybreak* (113:I)
from the worst of things (m) *that He created* (113:2)
and from the worst of the darkness (m) *of the night*
when the dark intensified, (113:3)
and from the worst of the blowers (f),

blowing on the knots (113:4)
and from the worst of one who is jealous (m)
when he is jealous. (113:5)

COMMENTARY°

This chapter, along with the following one, contains a directive from God primarily to His Prophet and secondly to the believers at large, to take refuge in Him and seek His protection in the face of any source of fear, subtle or apparent, known or unknown. It is as if God is unfolding His world of care, and embracing the believers in His guard. He is kindly and affectionately calling on them to resort to His care through which they will feel safe and at peace. It is as if He is saying to them: I know that you are helpless and surrounded by foes and fears. Come to Me for safety, contentment and peace. Therefore, the two chapters start with: *Say: I take refuge.*

Several accounts have been handed down concerning the revelation and popularity of Chapters 113 and 114. They all fit in neatly with the above interpretation that God, the Merciful, offers His care and shelter to His faithful servants. God's Messenger loved these two chapters profoundly, as is clearly apparent in his traditions.

God refers to Himself in this chapter as the *Lord of Daybreak.* The Arabic term, *falaq,* simply means 'daybreak', but it could be taken to mean 'the whole phenomenon of creation,' with reference to everything springing forth into life.

The phrase: *From the worst of things that He created* (113:2) contains no exceptions or specifications. Mutual contact between various creatures, though no doubt advantageous, brings about some evil. Refuge from it is sought with God by the believers in order to encourage the goodness such a contact produces. For He who created those creatures is surely able to provide the right circumstances that lead them on a course where only the bright side of their contact prevails. *And from the worst of the darkness of the night when the dark intensified.* (113:3) What is probably meant here is the night, with all that accompanies it when it rapidly engulfs the world. This is terrifying in itself. In addition it fills our hearts with the possibility of an unknown, unexpected discomfort caused by a savage beast, an unscrupulous villain, a striking enemy or a hissing poisonous creature, as well as anxieties and worries which may lead to depression and uneasiness, evil thoughts and passions that are liable to revive in the dark, during one's state of solitude at night. This is the evil against which the believer needs God's protection.

And from the worst of the blowers, blowing on the knots (113:4)

refers to various types of magic, whether by deceiving people's physical senses or by influencing their will-power and projecting ideas onto their emotions and minds. The sign specially refers to a form of witch craft carried out in Arabia at the time by those who tied knots in cords and blew upon them with a spoken curse.

And from the worst of one who is jealous when he is jealous. (113:S) Envy is the evil, begrudging reaction one feels towards another who has received some favor from God. It is also accompanied by a very strong desire for the end to such favors. I

Summary of Quranic Signs 113:1-113:5

How are the signs directed towards Prophet Muhammad?

Muhammad is told to say that he seeks refuge in the Lord of daybreak from the worst of things that God has created. He is to include three things: The darkening of night when it intensifies, those who blow on knots and those who are jealous of him and the role for which he has been chosen.

Students Summarize a Sign

Choose a particular sign *(ayah)* and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

Questions to Ask Students

What are we evaluating? Why?
Given these reasons or differences, can we generalize and list criteria?
Can we describe what to look for when judging an unjust person?
What features does an unjust person need to have? Why?

Student Assessment

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

Based on the history in this section I realized that when evaluating a statement as, for example, one found in the Hadith, I have to be cautious.
I learned to follow the criteria when interpreting a Quranic sign based on a Hadith.

LESSON 21. CRITICAL THINKING MORAL TRAIT VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE•

Integrity or moral uprightness, the state of being whole and undivided or a sense of inner and outer unity develops through moral discipline. It produces the attitude of God-consciousness (*taqwa*) when the discipline of prayer, fasting, giving the purifying alms, and pilgrimage is practiced. People are commanded to guard strictly their habit of formal prayers and stand before God in a devout frame of mind,[52] to pay the purifying alms,[53] to spend in charity secretly and openly, [54]—a beautiful loan to God[55]—a bargain that will never fail,[56] involving a glad tidings for the believers[57] and a cause of prosperity[58] and spiritual joy.[59] Those people who follow these principles are on the right path towards the moral trait of integrity under the true guidance of the Lord.[60] They remove the stain of evil from the people[61] and help them refrain from shameful and unjust deed.[62]

It is the practice of all believing people that when God grants them power in the land, they enjoin the right and forbid the wrong. *Those who, if We established them firmly on the earth, they performed the formal prayer and they gave the purifying alms and they commanded to that which is honorable and they prohibited that which is unlawful. And with God is the Ultimate End of the command.* (22:41)

Moral discipline or integrity involves the recognition of the need to be true to one's own thinking, to be consistent in the standards one applies, to hold oneself to the same rigorous standards of evidence and proof to which one holds one's antagonists, to practice what one advocates for others, and tc honestly admit discrepancies and inconsistencies in one's own thought anc action. This trait develops best in a supportive atmosphere in which people feel secure and free enough to honestly acknowledge their inconsistencies, and can develop and share realistic ways of ameliorating them. It requires honest acknowledgment of the difficulties of achieving greater consistency.

Critical thinkers learn to consistently apply standards of evidence and proof to themselves as well as to others. Students learn to practice what they advocate for others. They are able to readily admit any discrepancies and inconsistencies in their own thought and behavior. They are fervent believers in what has been justified by their own thought and experience. They bring together the person they want to be with the person that they are.

However, it is not uncommon for many people to be inconsistent in applying their standards once their ego is involved. People cannot become egocentric and overrate the positive traits of people who like them and underate those who do not. If their ego dominates them, they become blind to their understanding. They promote whatever serves their needs and disregard whatever does not support what they want.

QURANIC CHAPTER 114: HUMANITY (AL-NAS)

SIGNS 114:1-114:6

Makkah: *Say: I take refuge with the Lord of humanity,* (114:1)
King of humanity, (114:2)
God of humanity, (114:3)
from the worst of the sneaking whisperer of evil (m) (114:4)
who whispers evil (m) *in the breasts* (m) *of humanity,*
genie (f) *and humanity.* (114:6)

COMMENTARY°

In this chapter refuge is sought in the Lord, Sovereign and God of humanity from the insidious whisperer, jinn or human, who prompts evil ideas in people's minds. The chapter presents God's relevant attributes to keep away this invisible evil which the mind on its own cannot shut out. For the Lord is He who preserves, directs, cherishes and protects humanity; the Sovereign is He who owns, governs and independently runs the world; and God is the One who supersedes all other beings and supervises over all their affairs. The particular mention of humanity here brings us closer to God's protection and care.

God, in His grace, instructs the Messenger and his community of followers to recognize these of His attributes, and to seek His protection against this *sneaking whisperer of evil* which locates itself within their hearts. For they cannot rid themselves of such an evil which surreptitiously and imperceptibly creeps into their hearts, unless they are helped by God, the Lord, the Sovereign.

The nature of this evil-importing medium is identified in the text first as *the sneaking whisperer of evil.* Its function is outlined as to *who whispers evil in the breasts of humanity.* Then its origin is specified as from among jinn and humanity.

The style adopted here is quite significant because it draws our attention fully to the identity of this *sneaking whisperer* after describing its nature in order to show the process by which such evil is insinuated. This enables us to be alert and able to confront it. When we are given the full picture we know that this *sneaking whisperer* operates secretly. We also realize that it can be either jinn or human, for human beings can easily spread their evil stealthily.

We do not know how the jinn perform this whispering, but we certainly find its repercussions in the behavior of individuals as well as in human life generally. We know for sure that the battle between Adam (man) and Iblis (Satan) is a very old one. War be-

tween the two was declared by Satan out of the evil inherent in him, his conceit, envy and resentment of the human being. He was given God's permission to carry out this battle for some purpose which only God knows. But, significantly, the human being has not been left alone, dispossessed of the necessary means of protection. He has been provided with the power of faith—that is, conscious belief in, and knowledge of, God and His attributes through conviction and sincere devotion. Meditation and seeking refuge in God are among the most effective weapons. When the human being neglects these means of security and defense, he indeed has only himself to blame.

As for humans, we know a great deal of their curious ways of whispering and prompting. Some types are more devilish than satan, such as: 1) a bad companion who injects evil into his comrade's heart and mind while be is unaware, thinking bis friend to be trustworthy; 2) a ruler's counselor or advisor who 'whispers' all sorts of evil thoughts to him, trying to tum him into a tyrant; 3) an unscrupulous slanderer who fabricates and decorates tales to make them sound factual and convincing; 4) a hustler of immoral business dealings who tries to get through to people by exploiting their sensual, carnal desires. There are scores of other 'whisperers' who inconspicuously lay their traps, utilizing different weak points which they deliberately look for. These are more devilish than even the jinn themselves. Faced with evil in this guise, the human being is incapable of ensuring his own safety. God, therefore, points out to him the means be can employ in this fierce battle. There is also a very direct significance in describing the *sneaking.*

The battle is everlasting since this *'sneaking whisperer'* is always watchful for the right moment, when one neglects remembrance of God, to implant its evils. For a believer to be conscious of God once in a while is not sufficient, as the war continues till the end of time.

This concept of the battle and the source of evil in it, whether provoked by Satan himself or by his human agent, inspires us to feel that we are not helpless in it; since God, our Lord and Sovereign of the universe controls all creations and events. Though He has permitted Satan to attack, He has supreme power over him and He has also provided guidance for humanity. God leaves to Satan only those who neglect Him. By contrast, those who live in consciousness of Him are safe and protected against his intimidation and incitements. Thus, God-consciousness is supported by the only true power, God's, whereas evil is backed by a *'sneaking*

whisperer', cowardly in the open field, quick to retreat in war, and easily defeated when we seek refuge with God. This is the most perfect concept of the battle between good and evil. It is a concept which protects human beings against defeat and provides them with strength, confidence and contentment.

Praise be to God at the beginning and at the end. From Him we derive confidence and success. To Him we tum for unfailing support.

SUMMARY OF QURANIC SIGNS 114:1-114:6

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

Muhammad is told to recite to the people that he seeks refuge in the Lord, King and God of humanity from those who whisper evil. They are from among the people themselves or from among the jinn and they whisper evil in people's minds.

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN

Choose a particular sign *(ayah)* and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS

When have you found it difficult to listen to others?
Or: Why are people often unfair?
Would you have done otherwise? Would it have been easy?
Why or why not?
Why do so few people do this?

Critical thinkers team to consistently apply standards of evidence and proof to themselves as well as to others. We practice what we advocate for others. We are able to readily admit any discrepancies and inconsistencies in our own thought and behavior. We are fervent believers in what has been justified by our own thought and experience. We bring together the person we want to be with the person that we are.

However, it is not uncommon for many people to be inconsistent in applying their standards once their ego is involved. We cannot become egocentric and overrate the positive traits of people who like us and underate those who do not. If our ego dominates us, we become blind to our understanding. We promote whatever serves our needs and disregard whatever does not support what we want.

Other signs of an affective or emotional response to a situation showing a lack of wisdom and integrity are:

Contradiction (a combination of statements, ideas, or features of a situation that are opposed to one another),
Contrariety (opposition or inconsistency between two or more things),
Insatiability (incapable of being satisfied),
Importunity (insistent solicitation and entreaty when you beg someone to do something) and
Impossibilities.

The first two (contradiction and contrariety) have to do with reason. It often happens that when we least expect it, while we are thinking and reasoning in our minds, an emotion or feeling finds its way into our mind and carries us beyond all control. The cause of these systems not working is because we become incapable of reflecting.

When you are reading, notice whether you are clear about what you are reading. When you orally express or write out your views (for whatever reason), ask yourselves whether you are clear about what you are trying to say. In doing this, of course, focus on four techniques of clarification:

1. Stating what you are saying explicitly and precisely (with careful consideration given to your choice of words),
2. Elaborating on their meaning in other words,
3. Giving examples of what you mean from experiences you have had,
4. Using analogies, metaphors, pictures, or diagrams to illustrate what you mean. In other words, you will frequently: **state, elaborate, illustrate** and exemplify your points. You will regularly ask others to do the same.

OBSTACLES TO DEVELOPING INTEGRITY

ERROR*

Error and conjecture are obstacles to integrity which the Quran at several places denounces as equivalent to untruth or lies and which do not lend support to an individual in his moral life.[63] *I will turn away from My signs those who increase in pride on the earth without right. If they see every sign, they believe not in it.If they see the way of right judgment, yet they will not take that way to themselves. But if they see the way of error; they will take themselves to that way. That is because they denied Our signs and had been ones who are heedless of them.* (7:146)

QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS

How would someone else interpret them?

How can I adjust or support my interpretation?
What implications does the Quran want the reader to draw?
How can I help another reader to see that I mean this and not that?
Which of all of the things I'm saying is the most important?
How will another reader know which is most important to me?
Why is this detail important?
Have I assumed as a Quranic reader that I know something my classmates may not know?

Hypocrisy

Hypocrisy is another obstacle to developing integrity. A hypocrite is one who says with his tongue what is not in his heart,[64] who is distracted in mind, being sincerely neither for one group nor for another.[65] Hypocrites are liars.[66] They expect people to praise them for what they never do,[67] compete with one another in sin and rancor,[68] and hold secret counsels among themselves for iniquity, hostility, and disobedience.[69] Hypocrites-men and women-enjoin evil and forbid what is just,[70] and if by chance they come into possession of a position of authority, they make mischief in the land, break ties of kinship,[71] and yet claim to be peace-makers.[72]

Questions You Can Ask to Discipline Your Thinking

What precise question are we trying to answer?
Is that the best question to ask in this situation?
Is there a more important question we should be addressing?
Does this question capture the real issue we are facing?
Is there a question we should answer before we attempt to answer this question?
What information do we need to answer the question?
What conclusions seem justified in light of the facts?
What is our point of view?
Do we need to consider another?
Is there another way to look at the question?

Student Assessment

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I focused on developing moral integrity and I was able to learn how to internalize this moral trait.

LESSON 22. CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL STANDARD CONNECTING COMPLEXITIES AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS•

The sections (*ruku*) and signs (*ayat*) in the Quran contain a depth of complexities and interrelationships as here between ourself and God. They require you to think beneath the surface of what the section or sign is saying. The classroom experience exploring the Quranic message depends on the quality of your commitment to develop your ability to discern the depth of what you are studying.

CHAPTER 112: SINCERE EXPRESSION
SIGNS 112:1-112:4

Makkah: *Say: He is God, One,* (112: 1)
God, the Everlasting Refuge. (112:2)
He procreated not nor was He procreated (112:3)
and there be not anything comparable with Him. (112:4)

COMMENTARY°

Say: He is God, One. (I12:I) The Arabic term, *ahad*, used here to refer to God's Oneness is much more precise than the more frequently used tenn, *wahid*, which means One, *Ahad* has the added connotations of absolute and continuous unity and an absence of equals.

God, the Everlasting Refuge. (112:2) God's Oneness is such that there is no reality and no true and permanent existence except His. Moreover, every other being acquires whatever power it may possess from God who rules over this world. Nothing else whatsoever plans anything for the world nor, for that matter, decides anything in it.

The *Everlasting Refuge* also means the Lord to whom all creation turns for help, and without whose permission nothing is decided. God is the One and only Lord. He is the One God and Master while all other beings are but His servants. To Him and Him alone are addressed all prayers and supplications. He and only He decides everything independently. No one shares His authority.

He procreated not nor was He procreated. (112:3-112:4) This means that the reality of God is deep-rooted, permanent and everlasting. No changeable circumstances ever affect it. Its quality is absolute perfection at all times. Birth is descent and multiplication and implies a developed being after incompleteness or nothingness. It requires espousal which is based on similarity of being and structure. All this is utterly impossible in God's case.

And there be not anything comparable with Him (112:4) means that no one resembles Him in anything or is equivalent to Him in any respect, either in their reality of being, in the fact that He is the only effective

power, or in any of His qualities or attributes. This is implied in the statement of his being One made in the first sign, but it is repeated so as to contain and elaborate upon that fact.

The idolaters asked the Messenger of God: What is the lineage of your Lord? So God revealed what is to become Chapter 112. This short chapter is equivalent to one-third of the Quran, as authentic ahadith confirm. A man heard another man reciting this chapter repeatedly. He went to the Messenger the following morning and told him disapprovingly about what he had heard, as though he felt that it was too little. The Messenger commented: I swear by Him who holds my soul in His hand that it [i.e. this chapter] is equivalent to one third of the Quran.

And, indeed, there is nothing surprising in that. For God's Oneness which the Messenger was ordered to declare to the whole world is a belief to be ingrained in our minds, an explanation of human existence and a way of life in itself. From this standpoint, the chapter can be said to have embraced, in the clearest of terms, the principal and most fundamental ideas of the great truth of the Quranic message.[73]

SUMMARY OF QURANIC SIGNS 112:1-112:4

WHO IS GOD?

Now the revelation clearly and precisely states who God is: The One, God, the Everlasting Refuge. He is not brought forth as the result of any procreation nor does he bring forth offspring. While previous signs had made reference to God (Allah) with whom the Makkans were familiar and some of His qualities He creates, shapes forms, guides and so forth, no where had it been made clear to them who God was until these signs were revealed for the first time to them.

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN

Choose a particular sign *(ayah)* and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS

Why does the text tell you about interrelationships among the hypocrites and among the believers?

Why does the Quranic message think this interrelationship is worth knowing?

What factors make the interrelationship among hypocrites a difficult problem in tenns of being part of a community?

What are some of the complexities of this question? Is this question simple or complex?

Is it easy or difficult to answer well and truly? What makes this a complex question?

How are we dealing with the complexities inherent in the question?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I thought about the depth of interrelationships between myself and God as expressed in these signs.

I was able to explain the main points of the sings to another student.

LESSON 23(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ACTIONS•

In order for Quranic critical thinkers to develop their own point of view on an issue, they have to analyze their actions and then evaluate them. Practice develops into good judgment—judging behavior, explaining and justifying those judgments, hearing alternative judgments and their justifications, and assessing judgments.

When Quranic critical thinkers evaluate the behavior of themselves or that of others, they are aware of the criteria that they use so that the criteria themselves become part of the evaluation. They look at the consequences of their actions and see them as basic to the criteria for assessing behavior and policy. They base their evaluations of behavior on assumptions that have been reasoned through. This allows them to articulate and rationally apply principles.

QURANIC CHAPTER 53: THE STAR (AL-NAJM)
SIGNS 53:1-53:25

Makkah: *By the star when it hurled to ruin,* (53:I)
neither your companion went astray, nor he erred (53:2)
nor speaks he for himself out of desire. (53:3)
It is but a revelation that is revealed, (53:4)
taught to him by The One Stronger in Strength, (53:5)
Possessor of Forcefulness. Then, he stood poised (53:6)
while he was on the loftiest horizon. (53:7)
Night Journey: *Moreover, he came to pass near*
and hung suspended (53:8)
until he had been at a distance
of two bow lengths or closer. (53:9)
Then, He revealed to His servant what He revealed. (53:I 0)
The mind lied not against what it saw. (53:11)
Will you altercate with him about what he sees? (53:12)
And certainly he saw it another time (53:13)
near the Lote Tree of the Utmost Boundary (53:14)
near which is the Garden of the Place of Shelter(53:15)
when overcame the Lote Tree
what overcame it. (53:16)
The sight swerved not, nor was it defiant. (53:17)
Certainly, he saw some of the greatest signs of his lord. (53:18)
Saw you, then, al-Lat and al-Uzza (53:19)
and another, Manat, the third? (53:20)
Have you males and has He females? (53:21)
That, then, is an unfair division. (53:22)
They are but names that you named,
you and your fathers, for which God caused not
to descend any authority.

They follow nothing but opinion and that for which their souls yearn. And, certainly, drew near them the guidance from their Lord. (53:23)
Or will the human being have what he coveted? (53:24)
Then, to God belongs the last and the First. (53:25)

COMMENTARY°

RHYTHM OF THE SIGNS

As a whole, this chapter comes across as a superb symphony. From start to finish, a fine tune runs through its verbal structure, as well as its rhyming sign endings. This is especially apparent and deliberate at certain points, where a word is added or preferred to maintain the beat or the rhyme, in addition to how it enhances the meaning. One example is found in the two signs saying: *Saw you, then, al-Lat and al-Uzza and another. Manat, the third?* (53:19-20)

Had the second sign said: *and Manat, the third*, the meter would have been broken and the beat would not have been maintained. On the other hand, had it said, *and Manat*, the other one, the rhyme would not have been maintained. Each of the words used contributes to the meaning, but maintaining the meter and the rhyme is also deliberate. The same may be said where the word then is used in the signs: *Have you males and has He, females? That, then, is an unfair division.* (53:21-53:22) This word *idhan*, or then, is necessary to maintain the meter and the beat, but it also serves an artistic purpose.

The theme the chapter tackles is the one that pervades all chapters revealed in Makkah: Faith and its major concepts consisting of revelation, God's Oneness and the hereafter. The chapter tackles this from a particular angle emphasizing the truth of revelation and the solid foundation of faith as compared with the fallacy of idolatry, which lacks foundation.

EXPERIENCING THE MESSENGER'S HEART

As we recite this opening: *By the star when it hurled to ruin* (53:1), we live for a few moments on the sublime expanse experienced by the Messenger's heart. We rise over wings of light to join the company on high. We listen to the smooth beat echoed in the words, their meanings and the message they impart. We live with the Messenger's heart as it looks on, with all curtains and covers removed. He receives revelation from on high, listens and looks, and be commits to memory what was revealed to him. These moments were a special experience given only to his purified heart, but God favors His servants by giving them an inspiring description that imparts to them a feeling of the message, its echoes and meanings. He describes to them the journey that took his blessed heart to the heavens above, step by step, scene by scene and stage after

stage, as if they too are witnessing it all.

This inspiring description starts with an oath made by God: (53:1) The brilliant shining of stars before they set on the horizon is similar to the image drawn of Gabriel, the object of the oath.....*while he was on the loftiest horizon*.... Then, *He revealed to His servant what He revealed.* (53:7) Thus starts the harmony between the scene, the movement, the connotations and the rhythm.

Reports differ as to the star referred to in this *oath: By the star when it hurled to ruin.* (53:1). The closest that comes to mind is that of Sirius, which was worshipped by some people in the past. It is mentioned later in the chapter, as it says of God*: And that it is He, He Who is the Lord of Sirius.* (53:49) People in olden times paid special attention to this star. Ancient Egyptians used to link the flooding of the Nile to Sirius as it crossed the highest orbit. They watched it carefully to monitor the level of water in the Nile. It also has a special position in Persian and Arabian legends. It is probable, therefore, that the oath by the star at the beginning of the chapter refers to it. That the image chosen here is that of the star's hurling to ruin is significant, as it suggests that no matter how great a star is in size and position, it changes. It does not, then, deserve to be worshipped. What is worshipped should always be high and permanent.

The main object of the oath is the Messenger and the revelation given regarding those who are denying him: *Neither your companion went astray. nor he erred nor speaks he for himself out of desire. It is but a revelation that is revealed.* (53:2-53:4) This friend of yours is on the right course, well guided, sincere, gives you good advice, delivering the truth, free of error, illusions, fabrications and fancy. It is all a revelation bestowed on him from on high, and he delivers what is revealed to him in all honesty. The one who brings him this revelation is well known, following a well-charted course. The Messenger saw Gabriel with his own eyes and mind: *Taught to him by The One Stronger in Strength, Possessor of Forcefulness.* Then, he stood poised while he was on the loftiest horizon.... T*hen, He revealed to His servant what He revealed. The mind lied not against what it saw. Will you altercate with him about what he sees?* (53:5-53:7; 53:10-53:12)

It is a case of seeing someone very close up after he had initially appeared at a distance, and then there is revelation, teaching, looking closely and being certain. In such conditions there can be no lie in what is reported. This truth does not allow for argument or dispute: *The mind (heart) lied not against what it saw. Will you altercate with him about what Ire sees?* (53:11-53:12) A heart's vision is more certain because it precludes any deception that might cloud a persons eyesight. He saw and made sure. His heart was then certain that he saw the angel bearing divine revelations. The angel is a messenger God sends to teach the Messenger

and assign to him the task of delivering to humanity what he has learns.

CLAIMING DIVINITY FOR IDOLS

Such is the irrefutable truth in which Muhammad called them to believe. What basis, then, do they have for their worship and superstitions of alleged deities? How can they justify their worship of al-Lat, al-Uzza and Manat? How can they prove their dubious claims that these were angels, and that the angels were God's daughters, or that they can intercede with God on peoples behalf? Do they have anything to support these claims? (53:19-25)

There were many other idols venerated by different tribes, but these three were the major ones. It is thought that these idols were symbols representing angels whom the Arabs considered to be female and who they also claimed to be God's daughters. Therefore, why they were originally worshipped. What happens in such cases is that the original idea is lost and the symbol becomes, for the majority of people, the thing to be worshipped. Only a handful of knowledgeable people continue to remember the original legend.

God mentions these three worshipped objects, implying in the very question He asks that to worship such things is indeed singular: *Saw you, then, al-Lat and al-Uzza and Manat, the third, the other?* (53:19-53:20) Such singularity is clearly highlighted in His starting the question with: Have you considered, and in describing Manat as the third other. After this initial question, He then adds that their other claim that He had daughters while they had sons was even more singular: *Have you males and has He.females? That, then, is an unfair division.* (53:21-53:22)

The whole thing is based on illusion. It has no basis in human knowledge or in reality. No evidence or argument can be given in support of such claims: *They are but names that you named, you and your fathers.for which God caused not to descend any authority.* (53:23)

These names, al-Lat, al-Uzza, Manat, and all others like them, which are called deities, angels, female and God's daughters, are false and cannot be substantiated. God has given you no evidence in support of such claims. What God does not sanction is certainly insupportable. It carries no weight.

This address to the ungrateful ends in the middle of the sign. The chapter turns away from them as if they were not even there. Indeed, it speaks of them in the third person: T*hey follow nothing but opinion and that for which their souls yearn.* (53:23)

They lack argument, fact and certainty. They base their beliefs on surmise, and tum to their whims for evidence. Faith, however, cannot be based on either surmise or whim. True faith must be based on certainty and irrefutable evidence, without reference to whim or desire. The un-

grateful had no excuse to justify their following whim and surmise: *And, certainly, drew near them the guidance from their Lord.* (53:23)

When the deciding factor is ones own whim and desire, nothing can be right, and no guidance is of any use. The problem is not the absence of truth or evidence supporting it The problem isa powerful desire that wants certain things, seeking justification for what it wants. This is the worst situation we can find ourselves in, because then no guidance is of any benefit and no proof is convincing.

Therefore, the chapter disapprovingly asks: *Or will the human being have what he coveted?* (53:24) Will everything the human being wishes come true, have reality? Things are not like that Truth and reality are different from wishful thinking, which cannot change facts. The fact is that the human being errs when he follows his own desires. He is too weak to change the nature of things. Everything in this life and the next belongs to God who accomplishes whatever He wills in both worlds. *Then, to God belongs the Last and the First.* (53:25)

SUMMARY OF QURANIC SIGNS 53:1-53:25

WHO IS GOD?

God swears an oath by the star when it is hurled to ruin, something the Makkans had witnessed as a falling star. They are told: Just as stars are hurled to ruin, so to God belongs the Last and the First.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

Many of these signs (53:1-53:25) relate to Muhammad directly, confirming his character: He has not gone astray, he has not erred and he does not speak out of any desire on his part. It is a revelation from the One God whereby he warns and reminds people to be aware of their actions. Muhammad does not lie about the fact that he saw Gabriel when he came to pass near and hug suspended. Muhammad has seen some of the greatest signs of his Lord. Muhammad brings to the people the guidance from their Lord.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The signs address the tribes who worship three female gods: Lat, Uzza and Manat. It asks if this worship is to say that God had female offspring while they have males? Is this not an unfair division it asks rhetorically (not expecting an answer). These gods that you Arab tribes worship are nothing but names that you yourselves and your ancestors have named. You had no authority from the One God to do this. You follow nothing but opinion, conjecture and what you yourselves wish to have. The Quranic message asks: Will you have which you covet?

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN

Choose a particular sign *(ayah)* and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS

What comparison is the sign making?
Was this the real reason? Why do you think so?
What are the probable consequences of most of them who know not'?
What reasons were your evaluations based on?
Might someone else use a different standard to evaluate? Why?
Do you think the action was fair, smart, etc.? Why or why not?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I learned how the Quran analyzed the Prophet's actions on his Night Journey.
The Quran is speaking about worshipping something other than God simply because my ego wants to.

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LESSON 23(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
CONNECTING COMPLEXITIES AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS•

Students should learn to distinguish relevant from irrelevant facts. This is not always clear and, therefore, should be part of a classroom discussion. Students should also be aware that a fact that is relevant for one situation may not be relevant to a different one.

QURANIC CHAPTER 53: THE STAR (AL-NAJM)
SIGNS 53:26-53:32

Makkah: *And how many an angel in the heavens is there*
whose intercession will avail nothing at all,
but after God gives permission to whom He wills
and He is well-pleased? (53:26)
Truly, those who believe not in the world to come
naming the angels with female names, (53:27)
while they have no knowledge of it,
they follow nothing but opinion.
And, truly, opinion avails them not at all
against The Truth. (53:28)
So turn you aside from him who turns away
from Our Remembrance and he wants nothing
but this present life. (53:29)
That is their attainment of the knowledge.
Truly, your Lord, He is the One Who is greater in knowledge
of whoever went astray from His way.
And He is greater in knowledge
of those who are truly guided. (53:30)
And to God belongs whatever is in the heavens
and whatever is in and on the earth
that He may give recompense to those who did evil
for what they did and give recompense/airer
to those who did good, (53:31)
Madinah (53:32)

COMMENTARY°

The chapter tells the Messenger in this section that he should ignore those who turn away from God's message, those who preoccupy themselves with this present world, knowing nothing beyond it. It also refers to the hereafter and what it provides of requital for people's actions. It mentions that God knows all beings, ever since He originated them from the earth and when they were still in their mothers' wombs. Indeed: He knows them better than they know their own selves. Their requital will

be based on this certain knowledge. It defines their destiny.

Since everything belongs to God in both this world and the life to come, there can be no basis for the conjectures of the ungrateful that their false deities can intercede with God on their behalf: *And how many an angel in the heavens is there whose intercession will avail nothing at all, but after God gives permission to whom He wills and He is well-pleased.* (53:26)

Even the angels in the heavens shall not intercede but with God's permission; those who set imaginary gods for themselves follow only their own conjecture. Good and evil shall be duly recompensed. Having been proved in the previous signs to be false, their claims now fall apart. All fallacy and doubt is now removed from faith. Everything in this world and the following one belongs to God. Whims and desires cannot change reality. Intercession can only be accepted by God's leave. The final judgement is His alone.

SUMMARY OF QURANIC SIGNS 53:26-53:32

WHO IS GOD?

Only God gives permission to angels to intercede. It is Muhammad's Lord who is greater in knowledge of those who are truly guided and those who turned away from His ways.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

Muhammad is told to turn aside from those who turn away from the remembrance of God and who want nothing but the present life. As they have rejected the remembrance of God, their knowledge only extends to the present life.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

Those who name angels with female names follow only conjecture and opinion. Their conjecture and opinion will not help them at all against the truth.

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN

Choose a particular sign *(ayah)* and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS

How would you answer the Quranic question?

What are the implications of the fact that no burdened soul will bear another's heavy load?

What issues are the sign addressing?

Are you addressing this same issue or raising a new one?

Read the section and signs with one or more issues in mind and note relevant details. Then share and discuss your lists. You can then discover lhat sometimes you must argue for lhe relevance of a particular fact to an issue.

Another technique for developing your sensitivity to relevance is to change an issue slightly and compare what was relevant to the first issue to what is relevant to the second.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I understood how to relate what I was saying to the question at hand.
I did not have a problem sticking to the issue of relevance.
I was able to distinguish information that related lo the problem of relevance from information that did not relate to it.

LESSON 23(3). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
GIVING REASONS AND EVALUATING EVIDENCE•

Quranic critical thinkers have learned to examine their reasoning by taking it apart and evaluating the components of the signs. They have learned on which evidence to base their conclusion. They can insightfully discuss evidence relevant to the issue or conclusions they consider. Evidence and factual claims should be scrutinized and evaluated.

QURANIC CHAPTER 53: THE STAR (AL-NAJM)
SIGNS 53:33-53:62

Makkah: *Had you considered him who turned away* (53:33)
and gave a little, giving grudgingly? (53:34)
Is the knowledge of the unseen with him so that he sees it? (53:35)
Makkah: Book 27 Moses (53:36)
Makkah: Book 26 Abraham (53:37)
The burdened soul will not bear the heavy load of another. (53:38)
'The human being is not but what he endeavored for (53:39)
and that his endeavoring will be seen. (53:40)
Again, he will be given recompense for it
with a more true recompense, (53:41)
and that towards your Lord is the Utmost Boundary, (53:42)
and that He caused laughter and caused weeping, (53:43)
and that He caused to die and gave life (53:44)
and it is He, He created the pairs, the male and the female (53:45)
from seminal fluid when it is emitted, (53:46)
and that with Him is another growth (53:47)
and it is He, He Who Enriched and made rich (53:48)
and that He, He is the Lord of Sirius (53:49)
Makkah: Book 25 Aad (53:50)
Makkah: Book 25 Thamud (53:51)
Makkah: Book 25 Noah (53:52)
Makkah: *He caused to tumble that which are cities overthrown,* (53:53)
then, enwrapped them with what enwrapped. (53:54)
Then, which of the benefits of your Lord
will you quarrel with? (53:55)
This is a warner among the previous warnings. (53:56)
The Impending Day is impending. (53:57)
There is not other than God, One Who Uncovers it. (53:58)
Then, at this discourse you marvel? (53:59)
And will you laugh and not weep (53:60)
while you are ones who pass life in enjoyment? (53:61)
So prostrate yourselves to God and worship Him. (53:62)

COMMENTARY°

The final section speaks about the main themes of faith, which have remained the same since the earliest of the divine messages: namely, individual responsibility, accurate reckoning,just reward, and the return of all creatures to their Lord who determines what happens to them as He wills. Added to this is a quick reference to the fate suffered by earlier communities that denied the divine message. The chapter then concludes with a strong beat commanding all humanity to prostrate themselves before God and worship Him alone. Thus, the opening and the end provide a harmony of images, connotations, effects and musical tones.

The chapter moves now to its final part which maintains the same rhythm as the first part. It states the basic concept of divine faith, as it has been ever since the time of Abraham, who delivered the first full code for living. It makes their Lord known to humanity. It shows them how His will influences their lives, portraying its effects one after another in a way that strongly shakes the human conscience.

The chapter ends with a loud command that strikes both our ears and hearts, telling us what we should do to save ourselves from the abyss at the edge of which we perilously stand: *So prostrate yourselves to God and worship Him.* (53:62) Coming after such a discourse creating immense influences, this command struck awe in their hearts and they prostrated themselves as commanded.

These idolaters, who endlessly argued about the Quran and revelation, and about God and His message, prostrated themselves at this point. All the people listening to the Messenger reciting this chapter felt its strong beat like a blacksmith's hammer. All of them, Muslims and ungrateful alike, saw the Messenger prostrating himself at its end and they did likewise.

They could not resist the power of the Quran or question its authority. When they came to, they were stunned as they realized what they had just done.

There are numerous reports describing this event. While they are all unanimous about its details, they differ in explaining what appears to be a strange happening. In fact, though, it is not strange at all. It is an example of the effect the Quran produces and how hearts interact with it.

SUMMARY OF QURANIC SIGNS 53:32-53:62

WHO IS GOD?

The Lord is towards the Utmost Boundary. It is He who causes laughter and weeping, who causes death and life; who created the human being in pairs, males and females and that it is He who causes another growth. It is He who enriches and makes rich. He is the Lord of the Sirius. He caused the Aad and Thamud to

perish and the folk of Noah. They did great wrong and had been defiant. He causes cities to be overthrown. With all of this, it asks, which of the benefits of God will you quarrel with?

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

Consider the one who turns away and gives a little and even that is given grudgingly, reluctantly, resentfully and with an attitude of annoyance to have to give. Does this person have knowledge of the unseen? Does he know what was in the scrolls of Moses and Abraham?

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

A person's burdened soul is only responsible for himself. No one else will be held accountable. We human beings are only what we word and endeavor for and we will be compensated for just this. Muhammad is bringing you a warning, a warning of the Impending Day. Only God will uncover it. Will you laugh and weep, passing life in enjoyment without any concern for the Impending Day? Prostrate yourselves to God and worship Him.

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN

Choose a particular sign *(ayah)* and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS·

What evidence do the above signs give?
Why would the facts be true?
What assumptions are you making?
Do you have reason to think your assumptions are true?
Do you talk about what you have not yet done?
Why do you do so?
What evidence do you have?

If the reasons that you give as evidence are incomplete, you should ask yourself some exploring questions in order for the student to give a fuller explanation of how they reasoned an issue. When given written material to evaluate and interpret, you should reference specific Quranic signs that you have used on which to base your interpretation. In this way, you will be able to better clarify your understanding of a sign(s) and your interpretation better understood.

QUESTIONS THAT EXPLORE REASONS AND EVIDENCE:

INFORMATION

On what evidence is this conclusion based?
Where did we get the evidence?

How could we find out what other evidence exists?
What evidence supports opposing views?
Is the evidence sufficient or do we need more?
Is there reason to question this evidence?
What makes it questionable? Acceptable?
Does another view account for this evidence?
Why do you think that is true?
Do you have any evidence for that?
What difference does that make?
What are your reasons for saying that?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I considered the Quranic questions in these signs. Two questions are directed to the Prophet:

Is the knowledge of the unseen with him so that he sees it? (53:35)
Then, at this discourse you marvel? (53:59)
And will you laugh and not weep while you are ones who pass life in enjoyment? (53:60-53:61)

CONCLUSION

Through reciting the revelation, Muhammad invites the people to think about creation, about the universe, about purity and friendship, knowledge and loyalty, about understanding the meaning of existence, life and humanity's destiny yet they seek miracles from him and ask about the unseen. Signs are revealed that attempt to turn the people away from only thinking about unusual happenings, miracles, and extraordinary events and, instead, consider intellectual, logical, scientific, natural, social, and ethical issues. The Quran invites people to tum their sensitivities for the unseen and the unusual into a perception of Reality and Truth. And this to a people who only submit to the extraordinary and that from a person who tells them he is a Messenger! He invites the people to his divine mission and, at the same time, he officially announces: I do not know the unseen.

What also causes each person's amazement is in the Messenger's behavior and his continuous efforts and endeavors to lessen himself from what the people see in him. Although his Companions know him to be the extraordinary person that he is, he always refers to himself as just another human being like everyone else. He does this through his words, his behavior, his way of life, and his encounters with other people. His efforts are not to make him appear to be humble. Rather, they come from the innermost recesses of his heart. He who is a worshipper of the One God with his total being, he whose only desire is to establish the worship of the One God, the belief in monotheism, knows that whatever becomes exaggerated about him decreases the greatness of the message of monotheism, the genuineness of the revelation, and his prophethood. He sits like a servant sits, eats what a servant eats, and he knows that he is, in truth, the Servant of God. This title is his greatest source of pride and happiness.

EPILOGUE: THE QURAYSH CLANS REVISITED

The Quraysh are a powerful merchant tribe that control Makkah and its Kabah and that according to tradition descend from Ishmael. The tribe traditionally traces a genealogical history backwards from their ancestor Mudhar to Adam, Abraham and Ishmael: According to this tradition, Quraysh is Nadhr ibn ("son of") Kinanah ibn Khuzaymah ibn Madrakah ibn Ilyas (Elijah) ibn Mudhar ibn Nazar ibn Maad ibn Adnan ibn Add ibn Sind ibn Qadar, ibn Ishmael ibn Abraham, ibn Azar, (Terah) ibn Nahur, ibn Serug, ibn Reu, ibn Peleg, ibn Eber ibn Salah, ibn Arpachshad, ibn Shem ibn Noah ibn Lamech, ibn Methuselah ibn Idris (Enoch) ibn Jared ibn Mahalalel ibn Kenan ibn Enos ibn Seth ibn Adam.

According to history, the Quraysh tribe is a branch of the Kinanah Tribe, which descends from the Mudhar tribe. For several generations they are spread about among other tribal groupings. About five generations before Muhammad the situation is changed by Qusayy ibn Kilab. By war and diplomacy he assembles an alliance that delivers to him the keys of the Kabah, an important pagan shrine at that time which brings revenues to Makkah because of the multitude of pilgrims that it attracts. Qusayy then gathers his fellow tribesmen to settle at Makkah, where he enjoys such adulation from his kin that they make him their king. a position that is enjoyed by no other descendant of his. Different responsibilitie sare apportioned between different clans. There are some rivalries among the clans, and these become especially pronounced during Muham--mad's lifetime.

The Quraysh branch out into various sub-clans, who in tum branched out into yet further sub-clans. Roughly the division corresponds to the family lines of the current chieftain of that clan having sons.

Names of tribe, clan or sub-clan of early Muslims based on Ibn Ishaq.

1. **Abd al-Dar: Sub-clan of the Quraysh Clan**
Abd al-Dar Clan Confederate: Sub-clan of the Quraysh Clan
Abd al-Dar Clan Slave: Sub-clan of the Quraysh Clan

2. **Abd Manaf: Sub-clan of the Quraysh Clan**
   a. Abd Shams Clan: Sub-clan of the Abd Manaf Clan, parent clan of the Children of Umayyah
   b. Abd al-Shams Confederate: Sub-clan of the Abd Manaf Clan, parent clan of the Children ofUmayyah
      1) Umayyah Clan: Sub-clan of the Abd Shams Clan (Abu Sufyan, Uthman ibn Affan)
      2) Umayyah Sub-clan of Abd Shams Confederate
   c. Hashim Clan: Sub-clan of the Abd Manaf Clan, Clan of the Prophet's Great-Grandfather

d. Hashim Confederate: Sub-clan of the Abd Manaf Clan
e. Hashim Freed: Sub-clan of the Abd Manaf Clan
f. Muttalib Clan Confederate: Sub-clan of the Abd Manaf Clan
g. Nawfal Clan: Sub-clan oftheAbd ManafClan

3. Makhzum Clan: Sub-clan of Quraysh (Khalid ibn Walid)
4. Makhzum Clan Confederate: Sub-clan of Quraysh

5. Zuhrah Clan: Sub-clan of Quraysh (Sad Ibn Abi Waqqas)
6. Zuhrah Clan Confederate or Taym Confederate: Sub-clan of the Quraysh

7. Taym Clan: Sub-clan of Quraysh (Abu Bakr)
8. Taym: Fihr Ibn Malik Clan (al-Harlth Ibn Fihr): Sub-clan of the Quraysh

9. Adiyy Clan: Sub-clan of Quraysh (Umar ibn al-Khattab)
10. Adiyy Confederate: Adiyy or Makhzum Clan Confederate

11. Asad Clan: Sub-clan of Quraysh (Abd Allah ibn Zubayr and Khadlja)

12. Abd ibn Qusayy Clan: Sub-clan of the Quraysh Clan
13. Amir ibn Luayy Clan
14. Asad ibn Abd al-Uzza Clan

15. Jumah Clan
16. Jumah Clan Confederate Freed

17. Sahm Clan
18. Sahm Clan Confederate

Non-Quraysh:
Hun Tribe
ibn Khuzaymah
Khazraj
Muammil tribe
Khazraj Tribe
Malik ibn al-Najjar Clan
Khuzaah Tribe
Kinanah Tribe
Ghiffar Clan Sulaym Tribe
TamimTribe

APPENDIX 1: QURANIC SIGN 73:20

While Chapter 73 is first revealed around the beginning of the revelation, according to historical references, this particular sign was revealed one year later.

Makkah: *Truly, your Lord knows that you be standing up*
for nearly two thirds of tire nighttime, or a half of it or a third of it
along with a section of those who are with you.
And God ordains the nighttime and the daytime.
He knew that you would not be able to keep count of it,
so He turned towards you in forgiveness,
then recite of the Quran as much as was easy.
He knew that some of you are sick
and others travel on the earth looking for the grace of God
and others fight in the way of God.
So recite of it as much as was easy.
And perform the formal prayer and give the purifying alms
and lend to God a fairer loan.
For whatever of good you put forward for your souls,
you will find the same with God.
It is good and a sublime compensation.
And ask God for forgiveness.
Truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate. (73:20)

COMMENTARY°

The second part of the Chapter 73, consisting of a single, long sign that was revealed one year after the first part, that was revealed in the first year of the revelation according to the more authentic reports brings a compassionate touch, providing relief after much fatigue. It is a relaxation by God granted to Muhammad and the believers, when they have proved themselves to be dedicated totally to His divine message. They were exhausted after having stood up for long hours at night offering prayers in which very long passages of the Quran were recited. God never wanted to afflict Muhammad with the Quran, putting him to such hardship. Rather, He was only preparing him for the hard task that he was to undertake for the rest of his life. The believers who followed him would also have to share in this heavy burden.

The sign begins with friendly reassurance: *Truly, your Lord knows that you be standing up for nearly two thirds of tire nighttime, ora half of it or a third of it along with a section of those who are with you.* (73:20) The night may get longer or shorter, but you are all carrying on with the duty required of you, staying up close to two-thirds of the night, or half of it, or even a third. He is aware of your weakness. He does not want to

afflict you or put you to unbearable hardship; all He wants is that you should have the necessary training. Now that you have been trained, you can relax and take things easier: He knew that you would not be able to keep count of it, so He turned towards you in forgiveness, then recite of the Quran as much as was easy. (73:20)

These need to attend to their work and earn their living. This is essential. God does not want people to abandon their life's needs and lead the life of a monk who is totally devoted to worship. He knew that some of you are sick and others travel on the earth looking for the grace of God and others fight in the way of God. (73:20) God will permit you to stand up and fight against those who wage aggression against you. He will permit you to fight so that the Quranic message will have its safe and sovereign place. You may, then, relax and approach your duty in a comfortable way: *So recite of it as much as was easy.* (73:20)

Let there be no exhaustion or hardship. However, you must attend to all obligatory worship: *And perform the formal prayer and give the purifying alms and lend to God a fairer loan.* (73:20) When you have done this you may wish to add voluntary charity, which will increase your reward: *For whatever of good you put forward for your souls, you will find the same with God. It is good and a sublime compensation.* (73:20) *Turn to God, appealing for forgiveness of your shortcomings. The human being remains short of what is needed, no matter how diligent be tries to be. And ask God for forgiveness.* (73:20)

Truly. God is Forgiving, Compassionate.(73:20) This is a compassionate touch, providing relaxation and reassurance after a whole year of night worship. God relaxed this duty for the followers of Muhammad, making night worship voluntary, rather than an obligatory duty. Muhammad, however, continued on the same lines, offering night worship for no less than one-third of the night. He would appeal to his Lord in the depths of the night, and receive from Him what he needed for his struggle in life. Although his eyes might sleep, his heart would not. His heart was always busy with God's remembrance. It had no desire for anything else in this life.

APPENDIX 2: CORRELATION OF ORIGINAL CHAPTERS WITH CHAPTERS IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

1 = 96
2 = 68
3 = 73
4 = 74
5 = 1
6 = 111
7 = 81
8 = 87
9 = 92
10 = 89
11 = 93
12 = 94
13 = 103
14 = 100
15 = 108
16 = 102
17 = 107
18 = 109
19 = 105
20 = 113
21 = 114
22 = 112
23 = 53
24 = 80
25 = 97
26 = 91
27 = 85
28 =95
29 = 106
30 = 101
31 = 75
32 = 104
33 = 77
34 = 50
35 = 90
36 = 86
37 = 54
38 = 38
39 = 7
40 = 72
41 = 36
42 = 25
43 = 35
44 = 19
45 = 20
46 = 56
47 = 26
48 = 27
49 = 28
50 = 17
51 = 10
52 = 11
53 = 12
54 = 15
55 = 6
56 = 37
57 = 31
57 = 34
59 = 39
60 = 40
61 = 41
62 = 42
63 = 43
64 = 44
65 = 45
66 = 46
67 = 51
68 = 88
69 = 18
70 = 16
71 = 71
72 = 14
73 = 21
74 = 23
75 = 32
76 = 52
77 = 67
78 = 69
79 = 70
80 = 78
81 = 79
82 = 82
83 = 84
84 = 30
85 = 29
86 = 83
87 = 2
88 = 8
89 = 3
90 = 33
91 = 60
92 = 4
93 = 99
94 = 57
95 = 47
96 = 13
97 = 55
98 = 76
99 = 65
100 = 78
101 = 59
102 = 24
103 = 22
104 = 63
105 = 58
106 = 49
107 = 66
108 = 64
109 = 61
110 = 62
111 = 48
112 = 5
113 = 9
114 = 110

NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION

1. The rough equation that earlier Muslim scholars drew between the Islamic and Western conceptions of reason tended to be oblivious of the categories of reason and the Western critique of reason that divided it into "instrumental reason, critical reason, functional reason, abstract reason, imperialist reason, decentering reason" and the like. For details see Abdelwahab M. Elmessiri, "Features of the New Islamic Discourse," a Cairo conference paper, 1997: http:// www.21stcenturytrust.org/messiri.doc.

2. Some commentators have distinguished a total of 30 expressions that revolve around thinking over the *ayat*. See Abu Bakr al-Razi, *Tafsir al-Kabir* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1985), II, 222f.

3. Cf Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-'Ilm fi'l-Quran al-Karim* (Cairo: Maktaba Wahba, 1416/1996), 36.

4. Al-Isfahani, *Mufradat Alfaz al-Qur'an*, under "*Fikr*".

5. Cf., Karim Douglas Crow, "Islam and Reason" in *Al-Shajarah*, vol. 8, (2003),120-1.

6. Abbas Mahmud, "al-Agqad, Al-Tafkir Faridah Islamiyyah" (Thinking is an Islamic Obligation) quoted in Jamal Badi and Mustapha Tajdin, *Creative Thinking: An Islamic Perspective*, 2nd edn. (Kuala Lumpur: International Islamic University Malaysia, 2005), 6.

7. Cf. al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-'Ilm*, 41-45 quoting ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's *Miftah Dar al-Sa'ada*, and 'Agqad's book entitled *al-Tafkir Faridah Islamiyya* (Beirut: al-Matba'a al-'Asriyya, 1992).

8. Cf. al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-Ilm*, 200.

9. Cf .Ibid., 202.

10. Al-Raghib al-Isfahani, *Mufradat Alfaz al-Quran* (Beirut: Dar al-Shamiyya 1383/1964), 249.

11. Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i, *al-Mizan fi-Tafsir al-Quran* (Beirut al-Mu'assasa al-'Alami, 1383/1964) II, 395.

12. Ala uddin al-Mattagi al-Hindi, *Kanz al-Ummah fi Sunan al-Aqwal wa'l-Af'al* (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risalah, 1383/1981), hadith no. 5873.

13. Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali, *Risalat al-Radd 'ala al-Laduniyya*, ed. 'Abd Allah Riyad Mustafa, (Damascus: Dar al-Hikma, 1986), 241.

14. CE Ahmad Fu'ad al-Ahwani, *al-Tarbiyah fi'l-Islam* (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif bi-Misr, 1968), 227-228.

15. Cf. Aziz al-Azmeh, *Arabic Thought and Islamic Societies* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 109.

16. Cf. Diane F. Halpern, *Thought and Knowledge: An Introduction to Critical Thinking* (Mahwah: New Jersey, Lawrence Erlbaum and Associates, 1996), 21.

17. Cf. Ibrahim B. Syed, "Critical Thinking" as online at http://www.lrfi. org/articles/articles_101_150/critical_thinking.htm.

(18. Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Lahore: Shah Muhammad Ashraf, reprint 1982), 127.

19. Malik Bin Nabi, *Intaj al-Mustashriqin* (Cairo: Maktabah 'Amir, 1990), 34.

20. Iqbal, op. cit., 139.

21. See for details Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, *What's Right with Islam is What's Right with America* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2004), 4-5.

22. Georg W. H. Hegel, *Philosophy of History* (New York: Dove Books, 1956), 109.

23. Louay Safi, "The Creative Mission of the Muslim Minorities in the West: Synthesizing the Ethos of Islam and modernity," a conference paper presented at Westminster University, London, England February 21, 2004: http://insight.org/articles/Current/MuslimMinorities.htm.

24. Cf., M.H. Kamali, "Islam, Rationality and Science," in Islam and Science, vol. 1, no. 2 (2003), 126f, see also Mehdi Golshani, "Philosophy of Science from the Qur'anic Perspective," in *Towards Islamisation of Disciplines* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1989), 73f.

25. Cf. Ishfaq Ahmad, "Research and Development Culture in the Islamic World: Past and Present Problems and Future Directions," in Abu Bakr Abdul Majeed et al. (eds.) *New Knowledge, Research and Development in the Muslim World* (Kuala Lumpur: Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia, 2004), 14-15.

26. See for a discussion Oliver Leaman, "Institutionalising Research and Development Culture in the Islamic and Non-Islamic World: A Comparative Perspective," in Abu Bakr Majeed, (ed.) *New Knowledge*, 50-51.

27. Malik bin Nabi, *Intaj al-Mustashriqin*, 26.

28. See for details Mohammad Hashim Kamali, "Issues in the Understanding of Jihad and Ijtihad" in *Islamic Studies* 41 (2002), 623 ff.

29. There is a chapter on *ijtihad* in M. H. Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1991, 3rd edn. 2003). See also my article "Issues in the Understanding of Jihad and Ijtihad" in *Islamic Studies*, 41 (2002), 617-635; and "Issues in the Legal Theory and Usul and Prospects for Reform" in *Islamic Studies*, 40 (2001), 1-21.

30. Sergio Moravia. *The Enigma of the Mind: The Mind-Body Problem in Contemporary Thought*, tr. S. Staton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. First published in Rome, 1986), 4-5.

31. See for example, Howard Gardner, *Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligence for the 21st Century* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

32. See for details Roger Garudy, "The Balance Sheet of Western Philosophy in this Century" in *Towards Islamisation of Disciplines* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1989), 399f.

33. Mehdi Golshani, "From Knowledge to Wisdom: A Qur'anic Perspective," in *Islamic Studies*, 44 (2005), 13.

34. Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Fiqh al-Awlawiyyat*, 68.

35. Cf., Al-Ahwani, *al-Tarbiyah fi'l-Islam*, 189.

36. Mohammad Hashim Kamali is Professor of Islamic Law and jurisprudence at the International Islamic University Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur. "Reading the Signs," Center for Islam and Science. Gale Group, 2006.

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1. *Kitab al-Waqidi,* pp 211 1/2; Tabari p 112
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibn Ishaq, *Life of Muhammad,* p 115 ff.
5. See 6:7S-6:79.
6. Ibn Ishaq, *Life of Muhammad,* p I ISff.
7. See 58:11
8. Qutb, *In the Shade of the Quran,* vol. 18, p 118.
9. See also 3:81-3:87; 5:13; 5:15; 7:172.
10. Ibid.
11. See also 10:4; 13:29.
12. See also 9:112.
13. See 2:247.
14. See 28:14.
15. See 21:79.
16. See 12:68.
17. See 12:22.
18. See 28:14.
19. See 6:75-5:79
20. See Introduction to this work, p. 20.
21. S. Qutb, op. cit.
22. See 27:83; 41:18.
23. See 1:24; 4:129.
24. See S:30; 22:37.
25. See 2:177.
26. See M. M. Sharif, "Philosophical Teachings of the Quran."
30. See 30:30.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibn Ishaq, op.cit.
33. See 22:8
33. See 16:12.
34. See 23:70; 32:3; S2:33.
35. See 6:I50.
36. See 2:211.
37. See 34:9.
38. See 80:24.
39. See 7:185.
40. Ibn Ishaq, op. cit.
41. Ibid.
42. See 6:104.
43. See 30:21.
44. See also 9:112.
45. See 30:21.
46. See 2:219.
47. See 21:24.
48. See 27:64

S4. See 16:10-16:11
49.See 6:97-6:98.
*S6.*See 16:12. S7. SeeS:8. *S8.*See 2:238. *S9.*See *98.S.*
60. See 2S:29.
61. See 72:20.
62. See 2S:29.
63. See 22:34.
64. See 31:S.
6S. See 20:139.
66. See 31:5.
67. See 11:114
68. See 29:45.
69. See 6:148.
70. See4:157.
71. See 2:167.
72. See4:143.
73. See 22:34.
74. See 3:188.
75. See 5:65.
76. See 57:8.
77. See 11:114.
78. See 29:45.
79. See 6:148.
80. See 15:36-15:40.
81. See 6:99.
82. See 2:36.
83. See 3:I 75.
84. See 3:122.
85. See 16:27.

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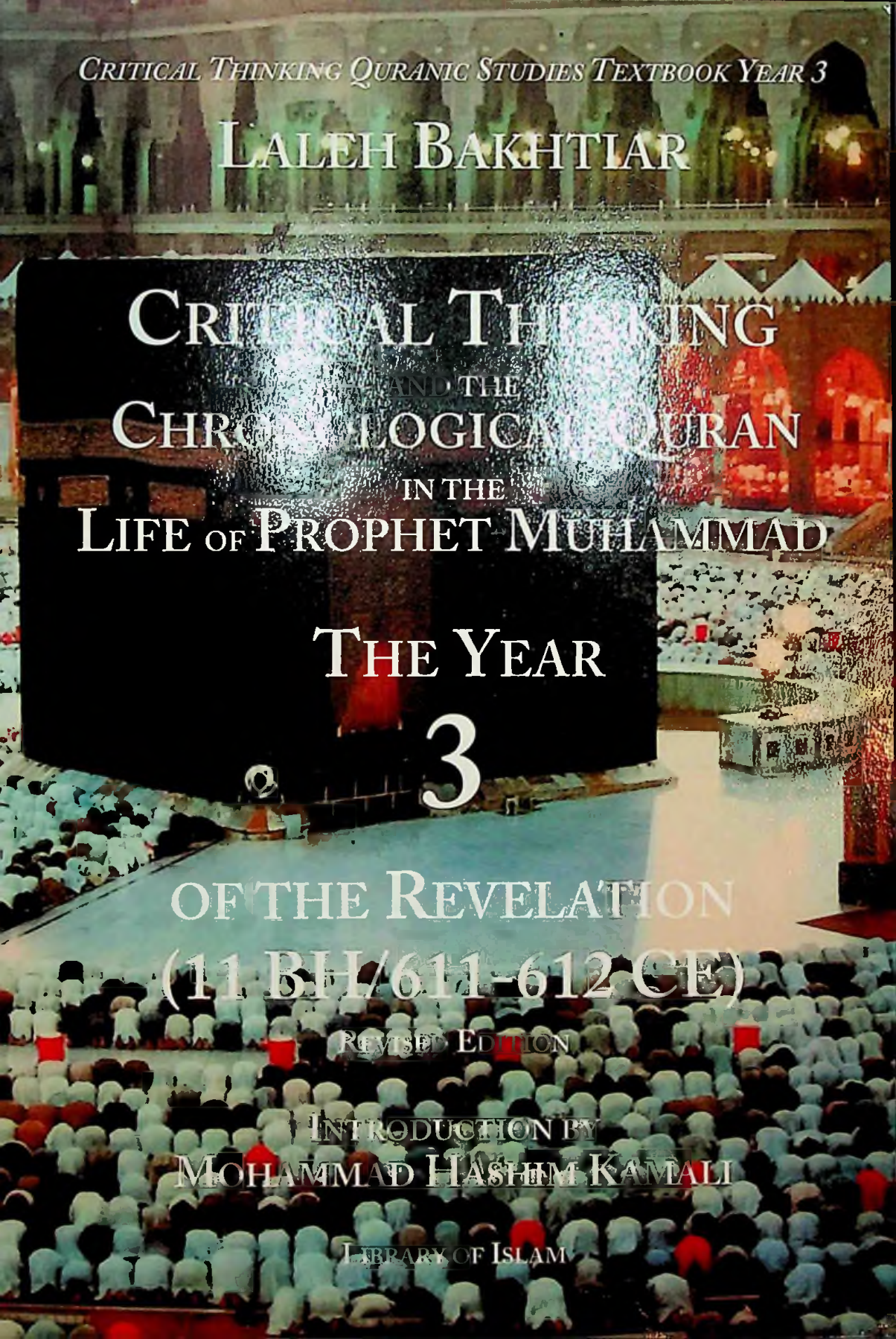
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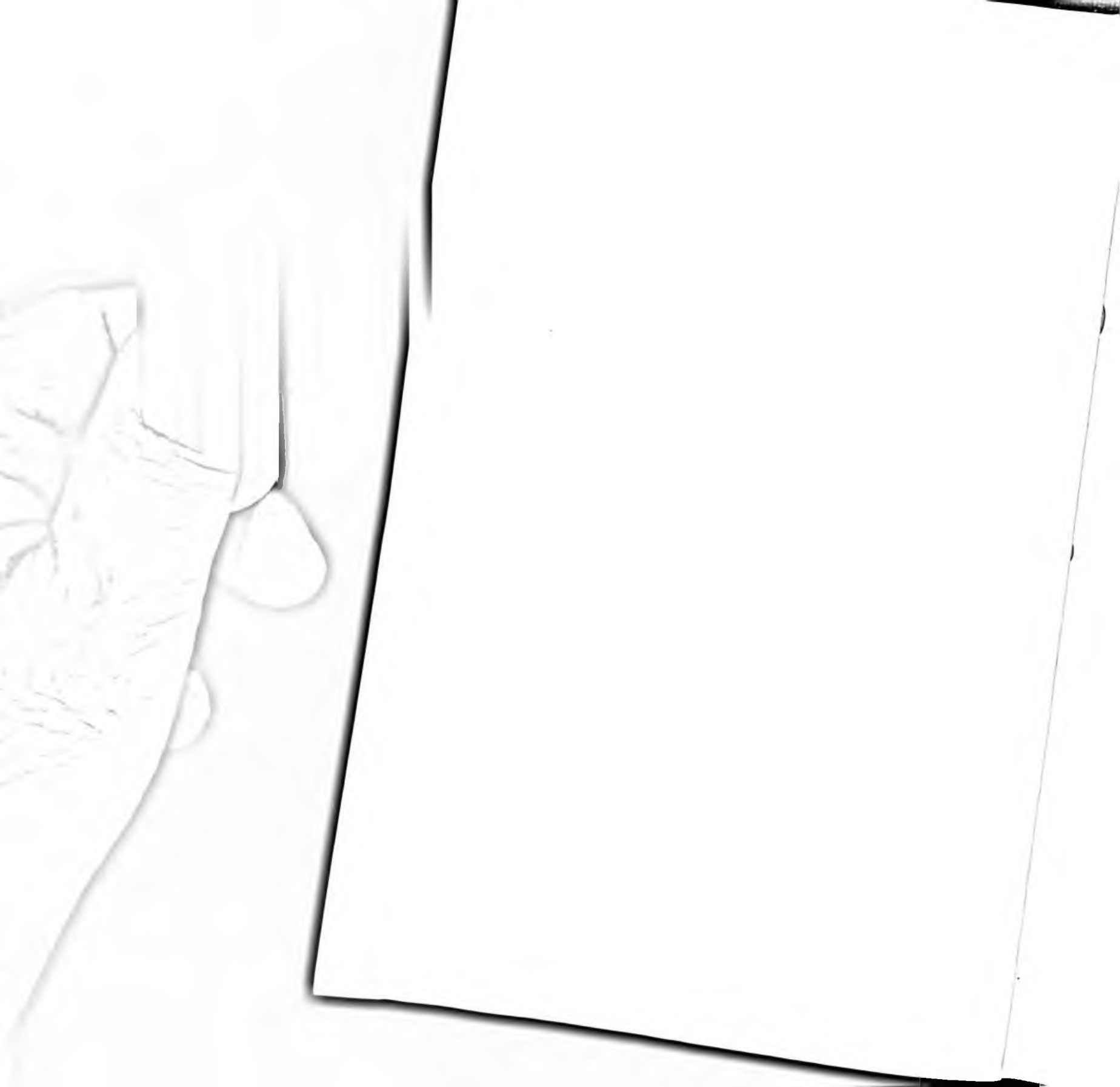
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PREFACE

THE CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STUDIES TEXTBOOK SERIES

There are thirty books in this series. Books entitled *Book Year 1* to *Book Year 24* consist of one book for each year of the revelation. The chapters' or sections' signs (*ayat*) are presented according to the 558 *ruku* or sections of the 114 chapters of the Quran. They each include the relevant chapter (*surah*) or chapters (when they are short) or sections, *ruku* (when there are multiple sections in a particular chapter) in chronological order. The chapters are numbered according to the chronological order of the Quranic chapters provided by al-Azhar University as the officially accepted order of revelation. Each section (*ruku*) is followed by a commentary by one of the well-known commentators.

Book Year 3 covers Muharram 1-Dhu al-Hijja 29, 11 BH/ ca. November 13, 611 CE-October 31, 612 CE.

Books 25-28 are devoted to the Quranic stories of all other Prophets and Messengers in order of their dates. *Book 25: Adam, Cain and Abel, Enoch (Idris), Noah, Hud and the People of Aad; Saleh and the People of Thamud; Book 26: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Jacob (Israel), Joseph and Job; Book 27: Moses, Aaron, Children of Jacob (Israel), Jethro (Shuayb), Joshua, Khidr and Samuel; Book 28: David, Solomon, Elijah (Ilyas), Elisha (Alyasa), Jonah (Younis), Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl), Ezra (Uzayr), Dhul Qarnayn (Cyrus the Great or Alexander the Great), Luqman, Zechariah, John the Baptist (Yahya), Mary and Jesus.* The last two are: *Book 29: The Life of Prophet Muhammad from Birth to the Revelation* and *Book 30: Teacher's Manual.* The last, *Book 30,* has been prepared for the teacher's Lesson Plans.

At the beginning of each lesson, there is an exercise in critical thinking skills. These consist of one of the following: **The Nine Intellectual Standards, The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** and **The Seven Moral Traits**. The Eight Elements contain thirty-five strategies. However there is no specific order as to how they should be learned and incorporated into our thinking process.

Once we understand the critical thinking skills and then apply them to the signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. Once the skills as presented in the Quranic message are put into practice with the grace of God, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behavior.

Each lesson is followed by questions for classroom discussion or for dialogue. At the end of each lesson there is an assessment/assignment for students to use while they are developing critical thinking skills as they hopefully learn HOW the Quran teaches critical thinking.

SOURCES

The sources for the history include the works of Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hashim, Waqidi, Ibn Sad and commentaries by Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn, Tustari and Sayyid Qutb. The sources for the commentaries of Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn and Tustari have been used with the permission of the publisher, the Royal Institute of Ahl al-Bayt in Jordan. They are available on their website www.altafsir.com.

The inclusion of excerpted commentaries (tafsir) by Sayyid Qutb's In the Shade of the Quran (available online) in this Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series is because Sayyid Qutb is considered by some extremist groups as their intellectual source. By including excerpts from his eighteen volume Quranic commentary, extremists cannot disclaim the importance of learning critical thinking as this series is to help young adults learn HOW to think using self-realization (tahqiq) and critical thinking (furqan) skills taught by the Quran. This in order to arm young adults with the ability to choose reason over any irrational extremist ideology that is presented to them.

TERMINOLOGY

All Quranic signs are translations from The Sublime Quran. For the Muslim, the Quran is the Word (Logos) of God. It is this Word of God that has inspired artists, artisans, poets, philosophers and writers, those who had been the exponents of Islamic culture and civilization for almost 1500 years. Yesterday and today's Muslim wants to know more about each Word that God chose for His revelation through the Quran. This realization, in turn, prompted the translation of The Sublime Quran, an attempt to give the sense of unity within the revelation to a non-Arabic speaking reader.

There are several points to note about the terminology used in the translation of the Quranic text and the commentaries.

1. The blessed Prophet did not bring a new religion; he came to confirm what was right in the messages of the previous Prophets. Does this translation speak to the universality of the Quran? The Quran tells the Prophet, the mercy to all of humanity, to speak to people in their own language. Following his example, in addition to the translation being unbounded by time, in several sensitive cases, the word chosen to translate an Arabic word is also of a universal or inclusive rather than a particular or exclusive nature. This adds to the broadening of the perspective and scope of the Quran so that it becomes inclusive rather than exclusive to one particular group of people. In other words, in this way a larger audience can relate to its message.

2. The actual word "Islam" comes from the verb, "to submit" (*aslama*), submission (*sallama*), and ones who submit (*muslimun*). The Quran refers to itself (the Quran) from the very beginning of the revelation (68:35).

3. As previously indicated, the four books (Book 25, Book 26, Book 27 and Book 28) are the stories of the other Prophets and Messengers mentioned in the Quran. While these stories do have lessons to be learned by the Prophet

and those who heard the revelations as well as for us today, they do not refer directly to Prophet Muhammad and his prophethood following the beginning of the revelation. What remains in these books of the Quranic signs in the 24 years of the chronological Quran relate directly to him, what he did and what he was told to say. This allows us to understand his life directly from the Quranic message, the Quranic Sunnah, without any interruption of the stories about previous Prophets and Messengers.

4. Most English translations of the Quran refer to the "Children of Israel." The word "Israel" when used in the Quran refers to Jacob, the patriarch of the children who followed him such as Joseph. Therefore, it should be the "Children of Jacob" as it appears in these texts.

5. The words "*kufir*" and "*kafir*" have been translated here as "ingratitude" and "ungrateful" where the context allows. This is the first meaning of the word and many of us in our lifetime have met Muslims who are "ungrateful." It is the ungrateful Muslims who practice intolerance by declaring anyone who says: Peace be upon you (*as-salam alaykum*) as a non-believer (with what is called *takfir*). In those cases, it would not be suitable to call them "unbelievers" or "infidels," but it is clearly appropriate to refer to them as being "ungrateful" and this would include the early Quraysh, ungrateful for God's revelation and prophethood of Muhammad, who ridiculed the Prophet and fought against the Quranic message of love, forgiveness and peace.

6. Yet another example of the use of inclusive language in an attempt to speak to people in their own language, is the use of God instead of Allah. Many English speaking Muslims, as well as many of the English translations of the Quran to date, use Allah when speaking English instead of God. The intention on the part of the speaker is to maintain a sense of piety. They feel that using Allah in English moves them in that direction. Many even claim that the word Allah cannot be translated.

However well-intentioned a person may be, when speaking English, the use of the word Allah instead of God, first of all, does not follow the Quranic verse that tells the Prophet to speak to people in their own language. Subsequently, it does not follow the Sunnah of the Prophet who did speak to people in their own language.

In addition, it creates a divide between Muslims who use the word and the English speaking people of various faiths to whom they are speaking. In effect, it creates the illusion that there is more than One God—Allah and God. The response of the English speaking person of another faith is to say: I do not understand your religion; you have a different God than I do and you call Him Allah.

It needs to be clearly explained to English speaking Muslims that, unlike what they may feel, they do not have a monopoly on the word Allah. Arabic speaking Christians and Arabic speaking Jews also refer to God as Allah. The Old Testament and New Testament, when translated into Arabic, use Allah for God.

English speaking Muslims, therefore, need to recall the message of the Quran that God is One (tawhid). In addition, the Prophet did not bring a new religion but confirmed what was correct in the messages of previous Prophets, namely, that God is One. Finally, they need to follow the example of the Prophet, as the Quran says he is the model or example to be followed, by speaking to people in their own language.

7. The Arabic language, much like old English, has the second person singular (masculine: anta (where the verb ends in *ka*). The English equivalent is the subject: "thou" or the object: "thee" or the possessive: "thy." As these are no longer in common usage in English, wherever the original Arabic uses one of these terms, the word "**you**" or "**your**" appear in bold font so that the reader knows the original was the second person singular. When the Quran is speaking directly to the Prophet, it uses the pronoun "thee" or "thou" so it is an important distinction to make.

Using you (second person plural) is done to help English speaking readers, recognizing that using the second person plural pronoun you (masculine: *antum* where the verb ends in masculine: *kum*) for God is to intimate that God is plural, the only sin in the Quran that is unforgivable. By putting the pronoun **you** in bold font indicates the true intention.

8. For the Arabic word "ayah," the English word used in these texts is "sign" rather than the Biblical term, "verse."

9. Several of the signs were abrogated over time. However the indication of a sign being abrogated was done after the complete revelation of the Quran. Whether or not a sign was later abrogated does not change the fact that the first Muslims who listened to the Quran, heard the signs that may have later been said to have been abrogated and that a hafez of the Quran recites all the signs as they appear in the original Arabic revealed to the Prophet. Whatever signs scholars later determined to be abrogated are still part of the Quran and, therefore, are not relevant to learning to be a Quranic critical thinker, learning HOW to think.

10. The first number that appears when the Quranic Chapters begin refers to the chapter number in the chronological order of the revelation so that Quranic Chapter 110 which was the last to be revealed is number 114 in the chronological order.

11. It is to be noted that whenever the name of Muhammad, Prophet Muhammad or the Prophet are used, one may say a silent prayer of blessings for him.

CRITICAL THINKING• COMPONENT

Quranic critical thinking (furqan, discernment) is a process that analyzes how we think. It is a 3-step process: **I**: Quranic critical thinkers apply the **Nine Intellectual Standards** (logic, being definitive, connected, appropriate, have worthiness, include numerous viewpoints, have right judgment, clarity, being fair and just) to: **II**: **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** (point of view, purpose, questions, information, inferences, concepts, assumptions, im-

plications): in order to develop: **III: The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** (belief in One God (tawhid), God-consciousness (taqwa), virtuous conduct (birr) or integrity through moral discipline, empowering constancy ('azm) and courage, persevering in goodness (sabara), love (hubb) or empathic altruism (ihsan) and being fair and just (rashad). The signs (ayat) in each section (ruku) teach any or every one of the **Nine Intellectual Standards** or any and every one of the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or any or every one of the **Seven Quranic Moral Traits.**

This is the key to critical thinking. We do not learn "what" to think, but, rather, "how" to think. Using the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** as an example, critical thinking can be summarized in the following sentence: Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** and consequences. We use **concepts,** ideas and theories to **interpret information** (data, facts and experiences) in order to **answer questions,** solve problems, and resolve issues.

The point of view in all cases is that of the Quranic message and the various individuals and groups that it addresses as this series is a course in Quranic Studies as well as a course in the chronological history of the life of the blessed Prophet (sira). Each student is encouraged to come up with his or her own questions and responses to those questions in order to learn how to become the Quranic critical thinker as the Quranic teaches us HOW to think.

It is important to note that there is no correct or incorrect answer. The important point is to go through the process with as many of the sections as one is able to do. Little by little, this will help each student or reader to develop into critical thinkers or "discerners" of the Quranic message creating a bond between them and the Quranic message.

Once we learn to analyze signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. It is important to note that the order of **The Nine Intellectual Standards** or **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or **The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** is not important. With the grace of God, once all are present, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behaviors.

THE NINE INTELLECTUAL STANDARDS

1. LOGIC (REASONABLE: 'AQALA, 'AQL)
2. DEFINITIVENESS (TO BE PRECISE: MUHKAMA)
3. CONNECTEDNESS (CONTAINING COMPLEXITIES AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS: (MUQTARIN)
4. APPROPRIATENESS (TO MAKE RELEVANT: SADID)
5. WORTHINESS (FOCUSING ON THE IMPORTANT, NOT TRIVIAL,

TO BE SIGNIFICANT: AHL)
6. NUMEROUS OR MULTIPLE VIEWPOINTS: 'DHARA'A)
7. RIGHT JUDGMENT (RUSHD)
8. CLARITY (UNDERSTANDABLE, TO BE CLEAR: TABAYYANA)
9. BEING FAIR AND JUST ('AQL, RIGHT-MINDED (RASHAD))

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES

1. EMBODYING A POINT OF VIEW, FRAME OF REFERENCE, PERSPECTIVE (RECOLLECT, BEAR IN MIND, TAKE FOR GRANTED: TADHAKKUR)
THINKING INDEPENDENTLY
DEVELOPING INSIGHT INTO EGO-CENTRICITY OR SOCIO-CENTRICITY
EXPLORING THOUGHTS UNDERLYING FEELINGS AND FEELINGS UNDERLYING THOUGHTS
DEVELOPING INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY

2. GENERATING A PURPOSE, AIM, GOAL, OBJECTIVE: (CONSIDER: RA'A)
CLARIFYING ISSUES OR CONCLUSIONS
CLARIFYING AND ANALYZING THE MEANINGS OF WORDS OR PHRASES
READING CRITICALLY: CLARIFYING OR DISCERNING THE SACRED TEXT
LISTENING CRITICALLY: THE ART OF SILENT DIALOGUE

3. RAISING QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, ISSUES: (REFLECT: TAFAKKARA)
PRACTICING DISCUSSION: CLARIFYING AND QUESTIONING INTERPRETATIONS
REASONING DIALOGICALLY: COMPARING INTERPRETATIONS
REASONING DIALECTICALLY: EVALUATING INTERPRETATIONS KNOWLEDGE, WISDOM
DEEP QUESTIONING

4. USING INFORMATION, DATA, FACTS, OBSERVATIONS, EXPERIENCES, REASONED JUDGMENTS (EVIDENCE: BASIRAH)
DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION: CLARIFYING VALUES AND STANDARDS
ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ACTIONS
DISTINGUISHING RELEVANT FROM IRRELEVANT INFORMATION
GIVING REASONS AND EVALUATING EVIDENCE

5. MAKING INTERPRETATIONS, INFERENCES, CONCLUSION, SOLUTIONS (UNDERSTANDING: TABASSUR)
ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ARGUMENTS AND INTERPRETATIONS
MAKING PLAUSIBLE INFERENCES OR INTERPRETATIONS
RECOGNIZING CONTRADICTIONS
NOTING SIGNIFICANT SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

6. UTILIZING CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS, PRINCIPLES, MODELS AND VOCABULARY (RECALL: IDHDHAKARA)
COMPARING ANALOGOUS SITUATIONS: REFRAMING INSIGHTS TO NEW CONTEXTS

DEVELOPING ONE'S PERSPECTIVE: CREATING OR EXPLORING ARGUMENTS
MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS
COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE
THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING
7. MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PREPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED (OPINIONS: ZUNUN)
8. GENERATING IMPLICATIONS, CONSEQUENCES (PONDER, EVALUATE: TADABBUR)
GENERATING OR ASSESSING SOLUTIONS
EXPLORING IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES IN DETAIL

1. Embodying a **Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective** (Recollect, Bear in Mind, Take to Heart (*tadhakkur*)):Whenever we think, we think within a point of view. What is the Quranic point of view in these signs? Does the Quran follow universal intellectual values of clarity, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, logic, fairness?

2. Generating a **Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective** (Consider (*ra'a*)): My purpose in addressing the Quranic purpose in these signs is . . .? Know exactly what you are after. Make sure you are not operating with a hidden agenda and that your announced and real purposes are the same. Whenever we think, we think for a purpose. What is the Quran's fundamental purpose in revealing these signs? Are there multiple points of view?

3. Raising **Questions, Problems, Issues** (Reflect (*tafakkara*)): What is the key question I am trying to answer. State the question as clearly and precisely as you can. Details are very important.

4. Using **Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments** (Evidence (*basirah*)): Actively seek the information most relevant to the question. Include in that information options for action, both short-term and long-term. We use experiences, facts and data that the Quran gives us. What information does the Quran give in these signs? What information do I need to answer my question?

5. Making **Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusions, Solutions** (Understanding (*tabassur*)): After reasoning (discerning) the above points, decide what the best answer (conclusion) to the question is. What inferences, judgments or conclusions do these signs make? What are my most fundamental inferences or conclusions based on these Quranic signs?

6. Utilizing **Concepts, Theories, Definitions, Axioms, Laws, Prin-**

ciples, Models, Vocabulary (Recall (*idhdhakara*)): The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are ... ? Figure out all significant ideas needed to understand and answer your question. You may need to analyze these concepts. Use a good dictionary. Inferences or conclusions are based on Quranic concepts and theories. What is the most basic concept in my question? What Quranic terms have I learned?

7. Making **Assumptions, Presuppositions, Taking for Granted** (Opinions (*zunun*)): Some important assumptions I am using in my thinking are ... ? Figure out what you are taking for granted. Watch out for self-serving or unjustified assumptions. The Quranic point of view is based on some assumptions. What assumptions is the Quran using in its reasoning? What assumptions am I using in my reasoning from the Quranic revelation?

8. Generating **Implications, Consequences** (Ponder (*tadabbur*)): Evaluate options. Take into account the advantages and disadvantages of possible decisions before acting? What consequences are likely to follow from this or that decision? The Quranic assumptions and my assumptions lead to implications and consequences. What are the implications of the Quranic reasoning? What are the implications of my reasoning? Am I correct in understanding the Quranic implications?

THE SEVEN QURANIC MORAL TRAITS

1. BELIEF IN ONE GOD (TAWHID)
2. GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (TAQWA)
3. VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE (MORALLY OBLIGATED: QANATA, GOODNESS, BIRR)
4. EMPOWERING CONSTANCY, COURAGE (AZM)
5. PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS (STEADFAST: SABARA)
6. EMPATHIC ALTRUISM (LOVE, MERCY, COMPASSION: HUBB)
7. FAIRNESS (NOT SELF-SERVING OR EGO-CENTRIC: 'AQSATA)

*****

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

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My gratitude also goes to the Center for Critical Thinking and, particularly, the online work done in youtube videos and other works by the educator-founders-members of the Critical Thinking Community, namely, the late Dr. Richard Paul and his wife and constant collaborator, Dr. Linda Elder. All indications of • throughout the text refers to quotes or paraphrases from their excellent work as part of the Critical Thinking Community, www.criticalthinking.org. My attempt has been for all the quotes and paraphrases used here to follow fair copyright use.

Whereas Drs. Paul and Elder may not have used their work in religious educational settings, due to the separation of church and state in the educating of American students, learning from their works it became clear that their teachings can help Muslim students, as well, if their method is presented through the content of the Quran. If Muslim students come to understand that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking, that is, discernment (furqan), HOW to think, they will be armed with the intellectual skills they need to confront Islamic extremism.

One of the main scholars that Islamic extremists use in their propaganda is Seyyed Qutb. In order to further arm Muslim students for any confrontation they may have with Islamic extremists who would quote that their ideas come from Seyyed Qutb, I have used his Quranic commentary, In the Shade of the Quran, in Chapter I of this work. Students will learn how, contrary to what they may be told or taught, in many cases, Seyyed Qutb's commentary (indicated by °) speaks of and describes the way that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking and Islamic extremists cannot say that I have left out their scholars.

Last, but certainly not least, I wish to thank Kazi Publications and its founder, Liaquat Ali, for his constant support and encouragement to forge new areas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqli*) will be passed to young students as they learn of a Muslim world deeply entrenched in Islamic narrative sciences (*al-naqli*).

INTRODUCTION
READING THE SIGNS: A QURANIC PERSPECTIVE ON THINKING
BY MOHAMMAD HASHIM KAMALI

The Islamic notion of *aql* (intellect) embraces the faith dimension of knowledge that is also informed by ethical values. The prevailing reading of the Quran on rationality consists of a coalition of faith and reason which is also cognizant of the metaphysical aspect of reality and the limits, therefore, of human reason. This may be said to be a dividing line between the Islamic and Western conceptions of rationality, especially in its post-Enlightenment context.

Thus, it is not accurate to draw a direct parallel between them, as was the case in the Islamic discourse of the colonial period wherein many Muslim writers greatly admired the Western conception of rationality. The twentieth century Islamic discourse has shown awareness of that difference as it began to comprehend the subtleties inherent in the Western lexicon on rationality and its cultural overtones.[1]

THE DIVINE SIGNS (*AYAT*)

The Quran teaches an essential doctrine of the *ayat* (God's signs in the universe) functioning as pointers to the providential purpose at all levels of creation. Thus the Quran makes frequent references such as 'signs for a people who understand—exercise their intellect'. This evidential role of the divine signs entails an accompanying demand placed upon humans to engage in a rational understanding of the signs and draw conclusions on the discovery of truth and correct guidance.

The human reception of the signs, thus, depends ultimately upon the integrity of reason, without which humans would be incapable neither of comprehending the signs nor of responding to their message. The more abundant is an individual's native endowment of reason, the greater is the possibility for him or her to attain a larger magnitude of understanding and a higher level of response.

The nexus between faith and reason thus constitutes the hallmark of intelligent Islamic spirituality, wherein human intellect and emotions are guided toward harmony with one another. The Quran repeatedly provokes its reciters to think about the signs of God in the universe and within themselves, to understand God's illustrious presence in them, and ultimately to vindicate the truth. The word *ayah* and its plural *ayat* occur in the Quran over 400 times, although the whole of the Quran introduces itself as a collection of *ayat*. To quote the Quran: *We will cause them to see Our signs on the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is The Truth.* (41:53) And, *On the earth are signs, for the ones that are certain and in yourselves.*

Will you not, then, perceive? (51:20-51:21)

God reveals the truth in a variety of ways, some explicit and others by allusion, the latter mainly through the modality of the signs, in order to provoke and engage the human intellect. The signs of God cannot be readjust off the face of the signs but require thinking and reflection. This is indicated in the phrase: *We will cause them to see Our signs ...* which suggests that the signs may not be instantaneously visible to the naked eye. The whole concept of signs seeks to forge a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* (38:29) A sign is also a portent and allusion to something other than itself and should not therefore be seen as the final message and purpose of the revelation containing it.

Approximately 750 verses, or nearly one-eighth of the Quran, exhort the readers to study nature, history, the Quran itself, and humanity at large. The text of the Quran employs a range of expressions in its appeal to those who listen (*yasma'un*), those who think (*yatafakkarun*), those who reflect (*yatadabbarun*), those who observe (*yanzurun*), those who exercise their intellect (*ya'qilun*), those who take heed and remember (*yatadhakkarun*), those who ask questions (*yas'alun*), those who develop an insight (*yatafaqqahun*), and those who know (*ya'lamun*).[2]

These and their derivatives (mostly occurring in the active verbal form) consist essentially of open invocations and encouragement to thinking that is not limited by a methodology or framework. *Meditate they not, then, on the Quran* (*afala yatadabbarun al-Qur'an*) (47:24) *Tadabbur* means concentrated and goal-oriented thinking provoked by the challenge to find something new or to solve a difficult problem.

Quranic references to thinking and the exercise of intellect occur in conjunction with basically five major themes: Belief in the Oneness and generosity of God (*tawhid*); reflection on the Quran; the human being and the universe; historical precedent; and thinking itself.

References to *aql* (intellect) and its derivatives occur on 49 occasions in the text. The typical Quranic expression, *ulu'l-albab* (those who possess vision and understanding), and its synonym, *ulu'l-nuha* (people endowed with intellectual abilities) occur 33 times in the text. Such expressions are frequently juxtaposed with the exposition of signs, such as in the sign: *Thus, God makes manifest His signs to you so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (2:242) or in the sign: *Surely, We made manifest the signs to you so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (57:17). Repeated references to pondering over the signs are variously nuanced such that they embrace within their fold the widest spectrum of people who may be endowed with different intellectual abilities and endowments.[3]

Al-Isfahani defines thought (*al-fikr*) as the power of the mind that facilitates access to knowledge (*'ilm*). Thinking (*al-tafakkur*) is the movement of

that power which is driven by the intellect (*al-'aql*), and this can only occur when an initial image of the subject is attainable in the mind of the thinker. Thinking cannot, therefore, proceed over something of which no image exists in the mind. This can be said of the self of God, for example, as we have no image on which to focus our thought.[4]

The human being can only think over the attributes of God through the observation of His signs. Broadly speaking, thinking proceeds over the whole of the created universe without any exception; indeed, the Quran repeatedly invites such in respect to both the physical and abstract aspects of reality, both in the present and in regards to bygone history that is only perceived by the intellect rather than sense perception. Often the Quran gives examples, parables, and narratives of other nations, and then follows them with the reminder, usually addressed to the Prophet, to recount the narratives of the past so that the people may think and reflect over them:

And recount to them the tiding of him to whom We gave Our signs. (7:175)

And there are the parables that We propound for humanity so that perhaps they will reflect. (59:21)

Truly, in that are certainly signs for a folk who reflect. (30:21)

A hierarchy of five perceptive-cognitive functions is also suggested, including and extending through hearing, sight, thinking, dhikr remembrance, and certainty.[5]

Given such a scale of intensified perceptive understanding, the Quran propounds the notion of *ulul'l-albab*, the thoughtful individuals who are possessed of proper understanding and response. *'Aql* is thus tied to the cognitive dimension of faith.

Significantly, the very term for reason and intelligence in Arabic, *al-'aql*, has at the core of its basic meaning the practical idea of "restraining" and "binding," that is, of holding one's self back from blameworthy conduct—being an interior self-imposed limit. Quranic commentators understand thinking (*tafakkur, tafkir*) as pondering and reflection, which is a mental activity and process, not an outcome.

Thinking (*tafakkur*) is considered as a form of worship of God if it is done with sincerity and good purpose. *'Aql* in its Quranic conception is also one that conceives the truth, and it is always in search of it. This conception of *'aql* precludes one that is rigid, arrogant, and misleading. Some have also drawn the conclusion from the ubiquitous Quranic emphasis on thinking that all Muslims must strive to be thinking individuals.[6]

Al-Qaradawi has quoted Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's (d. 751/1350) own observation as well as some epithetic statements, the latter narrated from other leading figures to the effect that "thinking for an hour is better than worship of many years," and another statement that "thinking for an hour is superior to a whole night of prayer." To this Ibn Qayyim added that "thinking is the act of the heart whereas worship is the act of one's limbs, and the former is

superior to the latter."

The pious caliph Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz (d. 101/718) is similarly quoted: Thinking over the bounties of God is the best form of worship. Abbas Mahmud al-Agqad went so far as to say that: Thinking—*al-tafkir*—is an Islamic obligation. Just as God Most High ordered us to worship Him by performing prayer and fasting, He also ordered us to think in numerous verses and in so many different ways, all of which vindicate thinking as one of the cardinal messages of the Quran.[7]

The Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge espoused with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression *al-tafaqquh fi'l-din*, that is, understands the religion, signifying a rational and inquisitive approach to constructing a Quranic worldview.

Islam, in other words, advises analytical knowledge and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely dogmatic approach. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions: Faith based on detailed analysis (*al-iman al-tafsili*) as opposed to undigested and uncomprehended faith (*al-iman al-ijmali*). The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the religious scholars of all the leading schools of thought. Thus it is declared in a sign: *But a section of people only that they become learned in the way of life and that they warn their folk.* (9:122).

We also note the distinction between thought-based knowledge and transmitted or received knowledge reflected in the twin juristic and hadith-related expressions of knowledge based on understanding (*'ilm al-diraya*), and report-based and transmitted knowledge (*'ilm al-riwaya*). The former is based on understanding and insight (*diraya wa tafaqquh*) and takes priority over the latter. Whereas *'ilm al-riwaya* relies mainly on memory and retention, *'ilm al-diraya* is based on cognition, understanding, and analysis.

Thus, if there are hadith reports, or any factual reports for that matter, which do not stand to reason and understanding, they would be most likely discounted and abandoned, with the exception only of devotional matters (*'ibadat*) which are based on faith and submission more than on rational analysis.

Another feature of the Quranic vision of thinking is indicated in its emphasis on wisdom and good judgment (*hikmah*) which signifies the quality of thinking, its regard for values, and its outcome. Wisdom and good judgment can easily be said to be more important than technical know-how and expertise, as it can guide expert knowledge as to its proper application and the attainment of excellence.

The Quran mentions *hikmah* twenty times, and in about ten of these it is immediately preceded by the word Book or *kitab*, which is a reference to di-

vine scripture—primarily the Quran, but also other divinely revealed scriptures. The text, thus, says with reference to Jesus: *And He teaches him the Book and wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel.* (3:48) The juxtaposition of *kitab* and *hikmah* is often contextualized by a reference to the sending of prophets who teach the people and guide them with scripture and wisdom (e.g., *wa yu'allimuhum al-kitaba wa'l-hikmata*) as it is said of the Prophet Muhammad: *And teaches you the Book and wisdom* (2:159) and: *Teaches them the Book and wisdom* (62:2 ff); the descendants of Prophet Abraham: *We gave the people of Abraham the Book and wisdom* (4:54); and of Luqman: *We gave Luqman wisdom* (31:12). The holistic, superior, and indivisible value of *hikmah* in the Quran is underscored in one of its signs to the effect that when God bestows wisdom on someone that person is indeed granted an immense source of goodness: *And whomever is given wisdom, then, surely, was given much good and none recollects no doubt but those imbued with intuition.* (2:269).

To mention *hikmah* together with the Book evidently means that the Quran should be read with wisdom and divorcing the one from the other by taking a totally dogmatic approach to the Quran goes against the divine purpose and intention of its revelation. To read the Quran in the light of *hikmah* thus means a comprehensive reading that reaches beyond the obvious meaning of its words to encapsulate the goal and purpose of its message and then also reflection on the ways and means of how its benefits can be realized for the individual and society.[8]

The repeated juxtaposition of the "Book and *Hikmah*" in the Quran led some commentators, such as the Successor, Qatadah ibn Diama al-Sadusi (d.118 H), Ibn Wahhab, the disciple of Imam Malik (d. 179/795), and the Imam al-Shafii (d. 205/820) himself to the somewhat unusual observation that "*hikmah*" is a reference to the Sunna of the Prophet. Many have taken and followed this view; but since the text does not specify such a meaning for *hikmah*, the word should convey its natural and unqualified meaning as I have depicted in this presentation.

Good judgment, insight, balance and avoidance of extremes, the ability to distinguish between truth and falsehood, and procedural accuracy are commonly associated with *hikmah* and *hikmah* as such becomes a dimension of evaluative thinking in. its Quranic idiom. Besides, when the Quran declares that God Most High endowed the Prophets David and Solomon and also the renowned sage Luqman with *hikmah*, it could not have referred to the Sunna of the Prophet Muhammad, as Sunna as such did not exist in those times.

The Quranic usage of *hikmah* reinforces the holistic quality of thinking. *Hikmah* also seeks to forge a close tie between reason and emotion (*'aql wa qalb*) thereby encouraging what is now known as emotional intelligence. This is how the Quran and also the Sunna often deliver their messages, for, unlike the modern statutory laws and texts, the Quranic guidance, commands, and

prohibitions are often espoused with appeals to the heart and mind of their readers.[9]

Al-Isfahani defined *hikmah* as the realization of the truth through knowledge and intellect and it is manifested in the performance of benevolent deeds.[10] According to another definition: Wisdom signifies comprehension of the truth and reality and the ability to avoid corruption in one's quest to attain perfection."[11]

Random House Dictionary of the English Language similarly defines wisdom as: Knowledge of what is true or right coupled with just judgment as to action. Wisdom is thinking informed by the light of the heart that often leads to action and contemplates its consequences in relationship with other relevant factors. This may strike a note with the renowned hadith in which it is declared that: Fearing God is the pinnacle of wisdom (*ra's al-hikmati makhafat Allah*)."[12]

It is presumably for this reason that the great religions of the world have urged the seekers of knowledge to combine it with wisdom. It is wisdom that confers a higher quality on thinking and helps knowledge to be used for the promotion of good giving it meaning and direction.

In an effort to train the individual to enhance his or her quality of thinking, al-Ghazali (d. 505/1111) discusses the two sources of knowledge that Muslim tradition has recognized. One of these is through human teaching and learning (*al-ta'allum al-insani*) and the other through divine teaching (*al-ta'lim al-rabbani*).

The former is externally transmitted from teacher to student, whereas the latter is conveyed by the Universal Intellect which is superior, more intense, and more effective than human teaching. This knowledge is internally acquired either through revelation (*wahy*), which is a prerogative of the Prophets, or it is acquired through meditation, thinking, and reflection.

Al-Ghazali subscribes to the view that the essence of all knowledge is centered in the inner self of the human person in much the same way as growth potential that is vested in the soil and seed, and it is through teaching that the individual's potential is developed.[13] These two aspects of knowledge, that is, the external and the internal, are complementary to one another. This is because no one can possibly teach or learn from any teacher all the sciences, some of which are learned through teaching but the rest inferred by the reflective thought of the individual. It is therefore important that the avenues of learning remain open both through teaching and through inner reflection, thinking, and illumination. This is another way of saying that all knowledge is acquired and developed through the senses, inner reflection and thinking, both of which partake in natural endowment and development through external transmission and teaching.

Al-Ghazali's views on the internal and external sources of knowledge tended to correspond with those of Ibn Sina (d. 428/1037), but which differed,

at least partially, from those of the second/ninth century Ikhwan al-Safa (c. 373/983). All knowledge, according to the latter, is acquired through the senses and none inheres in human nature. Knowledge that is developed through thought and reflection also originate in the senses. The same analysis is extended to the axiomatic knowledge of postulates that are derived and confirmed through the senses. In support of this theory Ikhwan al-Safa have cited the Quranic verse: *And God brought you out from the wombs of your mothers and you know nothing.* (16:78). All knowledge is therefore acquired knowledge, a view which may strike a closer note with some of the modern theories on the subject.[14]

Muslim thought in the middle ages did not admit the ontological distinction between tangible entities that could be sensuously apprehended and entities of a spiritual or subliminal nature. This may be said to be a more sound and realistic view of reality than is allowed for by the modern positivist doctrines of science. Being is manifested at various levels and in several forms, none of which is less real than the other. Arabic thought employed the notions systematized in Stoic theory that divide being into three locations: Verbal utterance, psychic representation, and reality—without this last in any sense having exclusive title to Being.

Al-Farabi (d. 950 CE) took up this view and assimilated psychic representation to the entities of reason. Others rehearsed this division with the addition of a fourth location, that of Scripture. Reality thus had a four-fold manifestation, depending on whether the subject existed immediately in itself or whether its like was graven in the mind (*dhihn*, psyche) composed of sounds, which together indicates the psychic representation, or was manifested in characters standing for sound and speech. All four have a basic characteristic in common which is existence (*wujud, haqiqah*).[15]

The Islamic and Western perceptions of creative and evaluative thinking both recognize this to be a skill that is developed through training and controlled exercise. It is through training and thinking that we adopt new patterns of perceiving reality that we are able to see differently and creatively. It is generally acceded that creative thinking and critical thinking go hand-in-hand and complement one another. Critical thinking means "involving or exercising skilled judgment or observation." Thinking is critical when it evaluates the reasoning behind a decision. Such evaluation must, however, be carried forth in a constructive manner.[16]

The purpose of critical thinking is to achieve understanding, evaluate viewpoints, and solve problems. In general, one's thinking is likely to become critical when concrete learning experiences precede abstract thought.[17] This strikes a parallel note, in its Islamic idiom, with thinking that is espoused with *hikmah*.

The famous yet controverted hadith: The first (being) God created is the intelligence (*awwalu ma khalaqa Allahu al-'aqla*), sparked prolonged discus-

sions among Muslim thinkers over many centuries over the implications of this statement. Among the issues debated was the priority of reason over revelation and the respective role of each in their mutual inter-dependence.

Another issue was whether the disparity among humans in respect of reason also affected the modalities of moral obligation. Some prominent thinkers including Abu Bakr al-Razi (d. 313/925) apparently advocated the primacy of reason over the revelation. This would be properly known as "rationalism," which deems the primacy of reason over revelation. This is different from "rationality" which means treating any issue by using reason without giving reason priority.

SOURCES AND INSTRUMENTS OF KNOWLEDGE

Commenting on the Quranic passage quoted earlier, Muhammad Iqbal observed that the Quran regards both self (*anfus*) and world (*afaq*) as sources of knowledge. God reveals His signs in inner as well as outer experience. The Quran thus opens fresh vistas of knowledge in the domain of our inner experience. Mystic experience and intuition, then, however unusual and abnormal, must now be regarded as perfectly natural and open to scrutiny like other aspects of human experience." But inner experience is only one source of human knowledge. The outer experience in the Quran, Iqbal continues on the same page, unfolds two other sources of knowledge—nature and history, and it is in tapping these sources of knowledge that "the spirit of Islam is seen at its best".

The Quran sees the signs of reality in the sun, the moon, the alternation of day and night, the perpetual changes of the winds, the variety of human colors and tongues, and in fact in the whole of nature as revealed to the sense-perception of man. The Muslim's duty is to reflect on these signs and not to pass by them as if he is deaf and blind *They have hearts with which they understand not. And they have eyes with which they perceive not. And they have ears with which they hear not. Those are like flocks. Nay! They are ones who go astray. Those, they are the ones who are heedless* (7:179), for he who does not see these signs in this life will remain blind to the realities of the life to come. The divine signs are observed through sense-perception using mainly the faculties of hearing, sight, and intellect: *Journey they not through the earth? Have they not hearts with which to be reasonable or ears with which to hear?* (22:46) The emphasis in this sign is on the faculty of reason and understanding, suggesting that not all of our information about nature comes directly from sensation, for if that were the case we would be no different from animals.

Frequent references to sense-perception as the principal mode of receiving the signs show the scientific/experimental import of the Quran. The Quran goes even further to suggest sense perception as the only avenue of knowledge, as the text already reviewed provides: *And God brought you out from*

the wombs of your mothers and you know nothing. And He assigned to you the ability to hear and sight and mind so that perhaps you will give thanks. (16:78) Knowledge of the signs is therefore acquired through the use of these faculties. In another sign, the Quran praises those who listen to the word and follow the best of it: *Those who listen to the saying of the Quran and follow the fairer of it. Those are those whom God guided. And those, they are imbued with intuition.* (or make the best possible interpretation thereof) (39:18). This sign apparently subjects the data of sense-perception to the exercise of intellectual selection. The text also teaches that sense-perception does not perceive all reality: *So I swear an oath by what you perceive and what you perceive not.* (69:37-69:38). Certainty (*yaqin*) may also be beyond the reach of human intellect, as the human mind may be blurred by the variables of time and space. What is deemed certain today may be uncertain tomorrow.

We also note that according to the teachings of the Quran, the universe is dynamic in its origin, finite, and capable of increase. Early Muslim thinkers do not seem to have grasped the Quranic emphasis on inductive reasoning and experimentation. It was indeed a slow realization for Muslim thinkers to note "that the spirit of the Quran was essentially anti-classical". Putting full confidence in Greek reasoning, Muslim thinkers tried to understand the Quran in the light of Greek philosophy, which in the beginning of their careers they had studied with so much enthusiasm.

The substance of Iqbal's analysis on this subject is also upheld by Malik bin Nabi (1905-1973), who understands the creative impulse of the Quran as the motivating force behind the efflorescence of science at a time when Muslim thinkers began to grasp the full impact of the Quran on experimentation and inductive reasoning.[18]

The dynamic conception of the universe in the Quran is also seen by its conception of life as an evolutionary movement in time. History thus constitutes the third source of knowledge in the Quran. It is one of the most essential teachings of the Quran, as Iqbal has further observed, that nations are collectively judged, and suffer for their misdeeds here and now. The Quran thus constantly cites historical instances, and urges upon the reader to reflect on the past and present experiences of humanity: *Customs passed away before you. So journey through the earth; then, look on how had been the Ultimate End of the ones who deny.* (3:137)

If a wound afflicts you, surely, a wound afflicted the folk similar to that. And these are the days We rotate among humanity so that God knows those who believed and takes witnesses to Himself from among you. (3:140)

And: *And of whom We created there is a community that guides with The Truth, and with it, it is just. And those who denied Our signs, We will draw them on gradually from where they will not know.* (7:181-183)

The Quran's interest in history as a source of human knowledge extends farther than mere indication of historical generalizations. "It has given us one

of the most fundamental principles of historical criticism."[19] Since accuracy in recording facts is an indispensable condition of history as a science, accuracy depends ultimately on those who report them. The reporter's personal character is thus an important factor in judging his testimony. The Quran says *O those who believed! If one who disobeys drew near to you with a tiding, then, be clear so that you not light on a folk out of ignorance.* (49:6). It is the application of the principle embodied in this sign to the reporters of the Prophet's traditions out of which were gradually evolved the canons of historical criticism.

A scientific treatment of history, however, requires a wider experience, a greater maturity of practical reason, and a fuller realization of certain basic ideas regarding the nature of life and time. These are in the main three, and taken together they constitute the foundation of Quranic teaching.

(1) The unity of human origin: The Quran states: *He creates you from one soul.* (39:6) And: *O humanity! Be God-conscious of your Lord Who created you from a single soul.* (4:1). But the perception of life as an organic unity is a slow achievement. Islam sowed the germ of this aspiration and it became a Quranic assignment of us to work towards its realization. Notwithstanding the fact that Christianity, long before Islam, brought the message of equality to humanity, the Roman Empire had no more than a general and abstract conception of human unity.

On the other hand, the growth of territorial nationalism in Europe has tended to stifle the broad human element in the art and literature of Europe. European colonialism was also inspired by a self-image of superiority. Europe assumed a superior image that non-European peoples could be freely dominated, exploited, and subjugated.[20] It was quite otherwise with Islam. The impulse of Islam was from the outset to make the idea of human unity a living factor in the Muslim experience that was to be taken towards fuller fruition.

(2) A keen sense of the reality of time, and the concept of life as a continuous movement in time: The Quranic view of the alternation of day and night as a sign of the ultimate Reality which appears in a fresh glory every moment and the tendency in Muslim metaphysics to regard time as objective—all this constituted the intellectual heritage and ideals of Islam.

(3) The merger between religious and secular values: This is a unique feature of Islamic thought which is distinguished by its attempt to bring harmony between them, probably for the first time in history. It was in the state of Madinah that we encounter a clear example where universally proclaimed moral values formed the criteria of political judgment. Political leaders and statesmen were expected to recognize not only the value of efficiency, but also of justice, human dignity, equality, and freedom. In his renowned *Philosophy of History*, Hegel (1770-1831) recognized that the unity between the secular and the spiritual took place in Islamic society and civilization long before it made any impact in the modern West: We must therefore regard (the

reconciliation between the secular and spiritual) as commencing rather in the enormous contrast between the spiritual religious principles, and the barbarian Real World. For spirit as the consciousness of an inner world is, at the commencement, itself still in the abstract form. All that is secular is consequently given over to rudeness and capricious violence. The (Muslim) principle, the enlightenment of the oriental world, is the first to contravene this barbarism and caprice. We find it developing itself later and more rapidly than Christianity; for the latter needed eight centuries to grow into a political form.[21]

The modern West followed the example of the historical Islamic world in demanding that holders of political power operate under a set of moral rules. But as the modern West harmonized the secular and religious only nationally, the international realm was free to operate under the dynamics of power politics and secular rudeness. This failure was a cause of the senseless violence that claimed over 100 million war victims in the twentieth century. Recognition of the danger of the purely secular politics led to the creation of the United Nations, yet even this effort was undermined by political realists who enjoyed a disproportionate sway among the political pundits of Europe and America.

Safi has rightly noted the irony that contemporary Muslim societies have unfortunately followed a similar course in decoupling the secular and the religious and now find themselves entangled in a crisis of legitimacy. Many Muslim regimes are driven by the logic of power and operate outside the realm of moral correctness. It is alarming to see that this decoupling has impacted the religiously inspired movements, which seem to succumb to the logic of power in their readiness to employ amoral--even immoral--strategies in their fight against political corruption and oppression.[22]

OBSTACLES TO CORRECT REASONING

The Quranic emphasis on pondering over the signs is also underscored by a set of guidelines to ensure a correct outcome of reflection and thinking over them. The text thus draws attention to a series of exclusions and factors that stand in the way of the proper functioning of intellect:

(1) Pursuit of caprice (*hawa*) which may consist of love, hatred, pomposity and prejudice that confound impartiality and sound judgment: *Had you considered he who took to himself his own desire as his god and whom God caused to go astray out of a knowledge, sealed over his having the ability to hear and his heart and laid a blindfold on his sight? Who, then, will guide him after God? Will you not, then, recollect?* (45:23)

And if you had followed their desires after what drew near you of the knowledge, there is not for you from God either a protector or a helper. (2:120)

But if they respond not to you, then, know that they only follow their own desires. (28:50)

And: *And obey not him whose heart We made neglectful of Our Remembrance and who followed his own desires and whose affair had been excess.* (18:28)

The choice is between two alternatives: caprice (*hawa*) and guidance (*huda*); the former evidently renders obscure one's attempt to attain the latter.

(2) Pursuit of conjecture in the face of certitude: And surely conjecture (*al-zann*) avails nothing against the truth (*al-Haqq*). *And most of them follow nothing but opinion. Truly, opinion avails them not against The Truth at all.* (10:36)

And follow up not of what there is not for you knowledge of it. Truly, having the ability to hear and sight and mind, each of those will have been that which is asked. (17:36) Knowledge and truth stand in contradistinction with the pursuit of conjecture. Note that the text says one should not follow conjecture until it is established and elevated to the rank of knowledge. It does not say that one should avoid conjecture altogether. In another place, conjecture occurs side by side with *hawa* or that which they themselves desire: *They follow nothing but opinion and that for which their souls yearn.* (53:23) This is the kind of conjecture or opinion that is meant.

Knowledge is established by sense-perception that often begins with a measure of speculation and doubt but which is affirmed by the light of reason and conviction. Some commentators maintain that the main context for this guideline is religion: Thus it is said that one should not take speculative positions in matters of belief. As for scientific enquiry and pursuit of knowledge, conjecture is neither discouraged nor avoidable.[23]

The ultimate purpose of this engagement is to attain the truth. Once the truth is attained, one should then commit oneself to it and observe it: *And what else is there after The Truth but wandering astray. Where, then, turn you away?* (10:32)

Completed was the Word of your Lord in sincerity and justice. There is no one who changes His Words. (54) (6:115).

(3) Blind imitation of others: The correct exercise of reason in Islam is tied to personal conviction as opposed to indiscriminate following of others, hallowed custom, and precedent. These must be judged in the light of reason and abandoned if found deviant and misleading: The misguided will say, as the Quran provides: *Nay! We will follow whatever we discovered our fathers were following on it —even though their fathers had been not at all reasonable—nor are they truly guided.* (2:170)

And: *Enough is what we found our fathers upon. Even though their fathers had been knowing nothing nor are they truly guided?* (5:104)

This was the response that Prophet Abraham and other great prophets received from their detractors, but the text address them again and again that both you and your ancestors were clearly misguided. *Certainly, We gave Abraham his right judgment before. And We had been ones who know of him when he said to his father and his folk: What are these images to which you be ones who give yourselves up to? They said: We found our fathers as ones who are worshippers of them. He said: Certainly, you and your fathers had been in a*

clear wandering astray.(21:51-21:54)

Forsake those who took to themselves their way of life as a pastime and as a diversion and whom this present life deluded. (6:70)

*Is it that **your** formal prayer commands **you** that we leave what our fathers worship?* (11:87)

As we shall presently elaborate, indiscriminate imitation of others is widely held to be the single most damaging cause of the decline of creative thinking among Muslims.

(4) Oppressive Dictatorship: The Quran takes to task arrogant dictators and those who support them and follow them. Hence the plea of those who say: *Our Lord! Truly, we obeyed our chiefs and our great ones. They caused us to go astray from the way* (33:66) should be of no merit. In a number of other places the text denounces the Pharaoh and Karun for their oppressive ways who misled their people in rejecting the guidance that was conveyed to them. *Pharaoh and his Council but they followed the command of Pharaoh. And the command of Pharaoh was not well-intended.* (11:96)

DECLINE OF CRITICAL THINKING

I shall not retrace well-documented history that Muslim thinkers were pioneers in the creation of new knowledge. It was due to the impact of the Quran that, in contrast to the Greeks who excelled in deductive method of reasoning and logic, Muslim scientists distinguished themselves in inductive and experimental approaches to scientific enquiry. The golden period of Muslim science started around 700 AD and lasted until about 1350 AD. Great thinkers such as Ibn Sina, Jabir ibn Hayyan, Abu Bakr Zakarriya al-Razi, Abu Rayhan al-Biruni, Ibn al-Nafis al-Dimashgi, al-Khawarizmi, and many others have left a rich legacy of contributions to the advancement of sciences in anatomy, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, optics, etc.[24]

After the fourteenth century creative thinking began to decline in the Islamic world due to a variety of factors, including the Mongol invasion and burning of Baghdad, the defeat of the Muslim Arabs in Spain and the continuing crusades, the collapse of the Ottoman caliphate, and the ensuing onslaught of European colonialism. The creative impulse of Islamic thought suffered setbacks as a result. Muslims were also beset with many internal problems including the alienation of philosophers, scientists, and thinkers from the theologians, sectarian controversies, and the prevalence of intellectual conservatism and imitation of past authority (*taqlid*)).

Philosophy and the sciences fell into a rapid decline while more rigid forms of instruction and narrower curricula prevailed. It was argued that orthodoxy was being threatened and that there was a need to restrain thinkers in order to defend religion. The latitude and diversity of discourse that expanded the scope of religious sciences, theology (*kalam*), commentary (*tafsir*), hadith, and jurisprudence (*fiqh*) gave way to narrower criteria of *kufr*, *bidah*, and

taqlid and the so-called closing of the door of *ijtihad* (*sadd bab al-ijtihad*).[25]

More recently, a certain abuse of Islamic authority operated by a dogmatic radicalism has exacerbated the decline of creative thought among Muslims. The situation is not helped by the prevalence of passivity in popular culture concerning the dogmatic excesses of these ardent proponents of imitation of past authority (*taqlid*). One of the salient features of this mindset is a certain ignorance of the essential impulse of the Quran on creative thought. Malik bin Nabi put it succinctly that the crisis of a civilization and a society at a critical point of its history "is not the paucity of its material objects but the poverty of its ideas."[26]

WHAT IS *IJTIHAD*?

The Quranic appeal to rational thinking and enquiry is not restrained by the methodology of *ijtihad*. There is, in fact, no clear text on *ijtihad*[27] in the Quran. *Ijtihad* as a concept originates in the hadith of the Prophet and the practice and precedent of companions. The methodology of *ijtihad* which is the basic theme of the science of the sources of law (i.e. *usul al-fiqh*) is itself a product of *ijtihad*. It seems that the Prophet also saw *ijtihad* as a creative impulse rather than engaging in the technicalities of legal reasoning—as the *usul al-fiqh* later developed in abundance. When the Prophet spoke of *ijtihad* or when he approved of its application, he seems to have done so in terms of *ijtihad* qua creative thinking.

One would readily admit that imposing restrictions on thinking, even if it were possible, by cultures and legal traditions could be exaggerated, in which case it would be prone to acquiring negative dimensions. One would not, on the other hand, advocate free thinking that is not limited by some kind of goal-orientation and values. Even the actual process of creative thinking, as earlier noted, is a skill that could be learned and refined by stages to direct it into productive avenues. The liberal tradition of the West tends to impose minimal restrictions on thinking whereas Islam tends to take a more guided approach to creative reasoning. Whereas both the Islamic and Western traditions recognize the authority of reason as a criterion of judgment, the liberal tradition has, unlike Islam, isolated spirituality and faith from the ambit of scientific rationality.

However, the methodology of *ijtihad* was also influenced in the course of time by a variety of factors, including the political climate, the change of caliphate (*khilafah*) to monarchy (*mulk*), Hellenistic thought in relationship to analogy (*qiyas*) and its syllogistic components, and the rift between the religious scholars and ruling authorities.[28]

Usul al-fiqh and its proposed methodology followed a difficult course and became embroiled in technicality that had adverse consequences for *ijtihad*. What is needed now is to recapture the purity of this vital concept, to make *ijtihad* as our principal instrument for originality and healthy adjustment,

but also to revise and reform some aspects of the theory of *ijtihad* itself that are no longer responsive to the prevailing conditions and challenges of our time.

I have elsewhere discussed the theory of *ijtihad* and its related issues and space here does not permit engagement in detail.[29] Yet I conclude this section by suggesting, however briefly, that the conventional theory of *ijtihad* needs to be revised and reformed in respect of the need:

1) to recognize the validity of collective and consultative *ijtihad* (*ijtihad jama'i*) side by side with that of *ijtihad* by individual scholars;

2) to allow experts in other fields such as science, economics, and medicine to carry out *ijtihad* in their respective fields if they are equipped with adequate knowledge of the source evidence of Islam. They may alternatively sit together with, or seek advice from, those learned in *Shariah*.

Ijtihad has in the past been often used as an instrument of diversity and disagreement rather than of unity and consensus. Although disagreement must admittedly be allowed in principle, yet there is a greater need today for unity and consensus. Scholars and learned bodies should not perhaps encourage excessive engagement in diversity of schools and sects but try to find ways that would help to close the gap between them and encourage unity on principles. This may require policy guidelines for different settings and countries, and, if so, that should be reflected in our approaches to *ijtihad*. Certain guidelines may also be provided by thinkers and leaders to stimulate consensus-oriented *ijtihad* within the ranks of the judiciary and legislative assemblies.

Ijtihad has in the past been conceived basically as a legal concept and methodology. Our understanding of the source evidence on *ijtihad* does not specify such a framework for *ijtihad*. Rather, we think of the original conception of *ijtihad* as a problem-solving formula for the problems encountered by individual Muslims and the Muslim community. This would confirm our view of the need to broaden the scope of *ijtihad* to other disciplines beyond the framework of *fiqh* and *usul al-fiqh*.

According to a legal maxim of Islamic jurisprudence, there should be no *ijtihad* in the presence of a clear text of the Quran and Hadith (*la ijtihad ma'al-nass*). This maxim should also be revised. This is because of the possibility that the text in question could now be seen in a different light and given a fresh interpretation in a different context. What we are saying is that the legal text may need to be understood first and that by itself may involve *ijtihad*. Hence *ijtihad* may not be precluded if it could advance a fresh understanding of the text in the first place.

The persistent decline of critical reason among Muslims is due partly to the notion that the exercise of personal judgment and *ijtihad* ceased with the epoch-making works of the legists and imams of the past. Added to this is the prevailing mindset that a Muslim should follow one or the other of the established schools of thought and abandon his judgment in favor of interpretations

of the earlier centuries whose originators could have no conception of the necessities of the twenty-first century Muslims. Until about 1500 CE, independent *ijtihad* allowed Muslims and Muslim societies to continually adapt in the face of changing societal conditions and new advances in knowledge.

Unfortunately, as Muslim civilization began to weaken about four centuries ago in the face of Western advances, Muslims began to adopt a more conservative stance in an attempt to preserve traditional values and institutions. As a result Muslim thinkers became inclined to view innovation and adaptation negatively. For all the rhetoric and symbolic form of the neo-radicals that tend to dominate the audience of Muslims, the spirit of Islam is often palpably missing from their endeavors, while more than ever *ijtihad* is needed where women, education, and politics are concerned.

ISLAM AND THE WEST

Scientific rationality essentially reduces intelligence to the level of neural chemistry where mental and behavioral phenomena are understood merely as manifestations of physical processes. It tends to deprive us of our noblest dimensions (faith, love, beauty), separates the soul from the body, and the sensory from the intelligible. In the realm of economics, we are merely a producer and consumer of goods and is moved solely by our individual self-interest. This too is opposed to the Islamic viewpoint which also sees in us morality and transcendent faith.

This physicalist analysis of intelligence is now increasingly being seen as conceptually inadequate. The real question is whether one may admit a human dimension which is autonomous and irreducible to a physical mass. In Moravia's phrase "can one posit something which exists and yet at the same time is non physical? Do the rejection of the soul and the achievements attained by bio and neurosciences oblige us to hold that man is nothing but body?"[30] Recently these have been attempted by some creative thinkers to reconceptualize intentions of 'reason' and 'intelligence' along anti-materialistic lines drawing on the experience of older non-Western traditions, or even popular folk conceptions.[31]

Islamic philosophy—which mainly studies purposes, as against science which mainly studies causes—sees, in line with the Quranic teaching, the role of objects and events as signs of divine presence and action. Faith is understood by Muslims not as a limitation on science but as its vista for enrichment and perfection.[32]

The variant perspectives of Western philosophy and science are also behind the Western puzzlement why Muslims have not become more secularized. This unwarranted assumption has in the past led to mistaken assessments of Islam and continues to foster genuine misunderstanding concerning the real nature of Islamic religion and intellectual traditions. The misunderstanding is unfortunately not unique to Westerners. For the majority of Muslims today

are also woefully uninformed of the depth and scope of their rich heritage on the authoritative validity of reason. Thinking Muslims should work to vindicate the symbiotic relation of faith and reason in their religion and see it as a source of enrichment and contribution of Islam to human understanding and civilization.

CONCLUSION

This essay advanced a Quranic perspective on thinking, which is affirmative in critical and goal-oriented thinking and also provides a set of guidelines that ensures its purity and purpose from negative reductionist influences. The guidelines so provided are also rich in advancing a spiritual dimension with the understanding that thinking which is not informed by morality and faith can lose its direction and purpose and can even become harmful to human welfare. From the Quranic vantage point, the sciences of nature should be key to our cognition of the signs of God in the universe. For this may be instrumental in solving individual and social problems without interrupting the cosmic order and the human habitat on earth. The blatant disregard of ethical values in science has weakened scientists' sense of responsibility and contributed to the degradation of the human condition on the globe.

Since thinking is a skill that can be advanced by self-application and training, it is amenable to guidance, bereavement, and enrichment. Universities and institutions of learning in Muslim countries are generally short of resources, and those who have the means still fall short, to their detriment, of nurturing the culture of reading and research among their students and scholars. Centers of higher learning may do well to establish a new order of relationship between the natural sciences and humanities, and between all fields of knowledge and human welfare and also the avenues of benefit to society. The present-day education system is due for a reappraisal in order to instill creative thinking and breadth of vision among students and scholars that is informed by the inter-relatedness of the various disciplines of learning. This could be done, as one observer suggested, "by adding sufficient number of courses in humanities to the science and engineering curricula, by cross-disciplinary interaction and collaboration."[33] The main characteristic of the human sciences, from the Islamic perspective, is that they are not value-free and have to be incorporated within the value system of Islam that is informed by the ethical and human dimension of values.

It is ironic to note, however, that the vast majority of Muslims are wont to rote reading of the Quran which is patently vacuous and devoid of thinking. The Quran is usually read, committed to memory, and cited for its spiritual merit rather than intellectual stimulation and enrichment. This is evidently not the advice one obtains from the Quran itself Al-Qaradawi has rightly observed about the current realities of public education in Muslim countries that "the system relies on memorization and cramming more than it does on compre-

hension and analysis. A typical weakness of this method is that the memorizer forgets as soon as the exams are over. But if what is learned is founded in understanding and comprehension, its substance will remain in the mind and will not be prone to oblivion so quickly."[34]

But the issue that we raise here is well-entrenched and originates in the overall emphasis that most educationists and jurists of earlier times have placed on the study of the Quran, Hadith and *fiqh* manuals, often calling attention to words and sentences of the text at the expense of comprehension and analysis. The basic approach to Quran studies thus emphasized correct pronunciation and memorization. This repetitive system of learning was particularly pronounced in the context of child education, although it was not confined to this framework as other and more advanced levels of Islamic scholarship also bore the same influence.[35]

Notwithstanding the profound influence of the Quran on the thoughts, mores, and cultures of Muslim individuals and societies, thinking by its nature does not lend itself to any predetermined framework and guideline. It seems that the Quran also seeks only to provide signs and signposts on thinking, but the subjective and innately individual bent of thinking is often inspired by imagination and insight which cannot be encapsulated by definitions and guidelines. A creative mind is unique by its attributes, and thinking that originates in a learned and upright individual is one of the greatest gifts of creation that can itself fit the description of divine example, or sign, of God on earth.

It remains to be added though that imaginative thinking has also been sparkled by sources and influences among great Muslim thinkers of other cultures and traditions—just as we note also that the great thinkers of history emerged in all regions, cultures, and religions. The substance of these statements is upheld in a renowned Hadith in which the Prophet instructed the Muslims to "seek knowledge, even unto China," and in another Hadith that "wisdom is the lost property of the believer; he is entitled to it wherever he finds it."

Knowledge and wisdom must therefore be ultimately seen as the shared achievements of humanity, endowed and posited by its outstanding and creative thinkers. This is also known from the fact that the outcomes of creative thinking are often shared and experienced far beyond geographical locales and frontiers—more so perhaps in the age of globalization.

It is hoped that the great thinkers and leaders of humanity make it a part of their agenda and commitment to narrow down the distances and divides between the intellectual and cultural traditions of the world and aspire them to the veritable vision of a shared destiny and wider human fraternity in their deliberations.

Mohammad Hashim Kamali[36]

PREVIEW

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) strategy. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

The Lessons in *Book Year 1* through *Book Year 24*, including *Book Year 3* presented here, are numbered consecutively in order of the revelation of a Quranic Chapter. Here, in *Book Year 3*, we begin with Lesson 24, that is, the Quranic Chapter 80 which is the 24th Chapter revealed, followed by Quranic Chapters 97, 91, 85, 95, 106, 101, 75, 104, 77, 50, 90, 86, 54 and finally, Chapter 38, the 38th Chapter revealed.

The chronological order of the chapters of the Quran that follow throughout the series is based on the list accepted by al-Azhar University in Cairo and is considered to be the official order. It differs greatly from the chronological order developed by Western scholars over the centuries and is much more detailed.

Quranic signs or verses (*ayat*) of each section (*ruku*) in a particular Quranic chapter are given in each lesson followed by a commentary, an analysis of the signs that answer three questions: Who is God?, How are the signs directed towards Prophet Muhammad? and How are the signs directed towards the Community? Each Lesson ends with a Student Self-assessment.

We do not have a great deal of detailed information about the life of the Prophet Muhammad during the Makkah period. The information that we have falls in the various lessons while the information related to the chapters (*ayat*) and sections (*ruku*) can be found in Appendix 1. Here appears the list of Muhammad's early Companions, the names of some who do not appear in Ibn Ishaq or Ibn Hisham, but have been recorded by other early scholars. We will hear of some of them who played significant roles in the future development of the community (*ummah*).

LESSON 24. CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL STANDARD NUMEROUS OR MULTIPLE VIEWPOINTS

In the Quranic context, there are the many viewpoints presented: those of the ones who are believers, the ones who are ungrateful, the ones who are doers of good, the ones who are wrongdoers, and so forth. The Quran presents multiple viewpoints and indicates a wide-ranging and broad-minded perspective. Its reasoning is clear, accurate precise, relevant and deep along with a breadth of multiple points of view. Thinking in terms of multiple viewpoints requires insightful thinking.

Here we note that the multiple points of view have created a difference of opinion among Muslims as to whether or not it was a Quraysh leader who was speaking to the Prophet who turned away when the blind man approached or the Prophet.

There is a difference of opinion among the various schools regarding the historic incident that the following first ten signs (80:1-80:10) refer to. Some scholars/historians say that it was one of the Quraysh chieftains who frowned and turned away. Others say that it was Prophet Muhammad who frowned and turned away.

> Once the Prophet was with some chieftains of the Quraysh, namely, his uncle al-Abbas Ibn Abd al-Muttalib, Umayyah Ibn Khalaf al-Jumahi and Safwan Ibn Umayyah, who were at that time were among the ungrateful. At some point during their conversation, Abd Allah son of Maktum, a maternal cousin of Khadija, approached the group. As he was blind, he could not see that the Prophet was sitting with a group of people.[1]
>
> Ibn Maktum said: O Messenger of God! Teach me of that which God has taught you.
>
> The Prophet received this relative of his beloved wife, Khadija, with honor and pleasure and gave him the place closest to him. Since Ibn Maktum was poor and blind, the chieftains of the Quraysh looked down upon him and did not like the honor done and the place given to him by the Prophet in their presence. One of them frowned at Abd Allah and sat, turning his back to him. This displeased God and Gabriel brought this chapter and revealed it to the Prophet then and there.
>
> This chapter commends Abd Allah's position, though poor and blind and condemns the attitude of the Quraysh chieftains. *He frowned and turned away that the blind man drew near him.* (80:1-80:2) Note the address is to the third person singular, *him*. This indicates that the sign was referring to one of the Quraysh chieftains as the Quran addresses the Prophet as "thou" or "thee"or **you** in this translation.[2]

The questioning in this sign clearly indicates that the doubt about Abd Allah being benefited by the talk with the Prophet or not could have been in the mind of one who had not yet embraced the faith and that could never have occurred to a Messenger of God who has been sent to preach the faith to one and all irrespective of any worldly position of the people. The questioning clearly indicates that the addressee was someone other than the Prophet.

The fact that this sign wants to teach is that no spiritual value should be assigned to material wealth and the prospects of guidance being effective or not should not be measured by anyone's economic position in life or his influence in society. *And what will cause you to recognize so that perhaps he will purify himself.* (80:3) The sign is speaking to the Quraysh chieftain who turned his back.

What is wanted to acquire knowledge is the will to learn. The essential urge in any poor man, may help him to grow more in spiritual excellence than the arrogant self-exaltation wealthy one puffed up from his riches and position. *Or yet recollect and a reminder profit him?* (80:4)

Faith requires humility and naturally goes with meekness and the humble: *But as for he who was self-complacent* (80:5) the divine will is opposed to any attention paid to such an arrogant one who looked down at Abd Allah ibn Maktum because of his poverty and being blind and helpless. *Then, you have attended to him.* (80:6) Here, the sign says that Muhammad (thou) attended to him.

It was not the concern of Muhammad if the Quraysh chieftain did not benefit himself by the preaching of the Prophet: *And not upon you is any blame if he purifies not himself. Yet as for him who drew near to you, coming eagerly for knowledge* (80:7-80:8) attention should be paid first to the one who comes striving with earnestness. *And he dreads God, then, you have paid no heed to him?* (80:9-89:10) Muhammad is then directed told, other than giving him a place of honor and having him sit next to you, you need to pay more attention to Ibn Umm Maktum as he is a believer.[3]

The other view states: *He frowned and turned away that the blind man drew near him.* (80:1-80:2) These signs refer to Ibn Umm Maktum. The latter went to see the Messenger while the latter was meeting Utbah ibn Rabiah, Abu Jahl ibn Hisham, Abbas ibn Abd al-Muttalib, and Ubayy and Umayyah the sons of Khalaf. He was calling them to God, hoping that they might embrace the Quranic message.

Ibn Umm Maktum stood up and said: O Messenger of God, teach me of that which God has taught you. He kept on requesting him and repeating his request, not knowing that he was busy and

dealing with someone else. Signs of annoyance appeared on the face of the Messenger because of being repeatedly interrupted.

The Messenger frowned and turned away from him, and faced toward the people he was addressing. God then revealed these signs. After this, the Messenger used to honor him, and would say, whenever he saw him: Welcome to the one about whom my Lord has rebuked me![4]

QURANIC CHAPTER 80: HE FROWNED (AL-ABASA)
SIGNS 80:1-80:42

Makkah: *He frowned and turned away* (80:1)
that the blind man drew near him. (80:2)
And what will cause ***you*** *to recognize*
so that perhaps he will purify himself (80:3)
or yet recollect and a reminder profit him? (80:4)
But as for he who was self-complacent, (80:5)
then, ***you*** *attend to him* (80:6)
and not upon ***you*** *is any blame*
if he purifies not himself. (80:7)
Yet as for him who drew near to ***you***
coming eagerly for knowledge (80:8)
and he dreads God, (80:9)
then, ***you*** *have paid no heed to him?* (80:10)
No indeed! Truly, this is an admonition. (80:11)
So let whoever willed, remember it (80:12)
in scrolls to be held in esteem, (80:13)
ones that are exalted and ones that are purified (80:14)
by the hands of generous writers (80:15)
and ones who are kindly, generous. (80:16)
Perdition to the human being! How ungrateful he is! (80:17)
From which thing did He create him? (80:18)
He created him from seminal fluid then,
ordained that he be. (80:19)
He made the way easy for him again. (80:20)
Again, He caused him to die and be buried. (80:21)
Again, when He willed, He will revive him. (80:22)
No indeed! The human being finishes not
what He commanded him. (80:23)
Then, let the human being look on his food— (80:24)
how We, truly, unloosed rain water with a pouring out. (80:25)

Again, We split the earth, a splitting. (80:26)
And We put forth in it grain (80:27)
and grapevines and green fodder (80:28)
and olives and date palm trees (80:29)
and dense fertile gardens (80:30)
and sweet fruits and whatever grows on the earth, (80:31)
an enjoyment for you and your flocks. (80:32)
Then, when the blare drew near, (80:33)
that Day a man will run away from his brother (80:34)
and his mother and his father (80:35)
and his companion wife and his children. (80:36)
For every man of them on that Day
will be a matter that will preoccupy him. (80:37)
Faces that Day will be ones that are polished, (80:38)
ones who are laugh and ones who rejoice at good tidings. (80:39)
And faces on that Day will be dust-stained. (80:40)
Gloom will come over them. (80:41)
Those, they are the ones who are ungrateful,
ones who act immorally. (80:42)

COMMENTARY°

THE RHYTHM OF THE SIGNS

This chapter discusses certain principles of grave importance. It is unique in its images and the impressions it leaves. Furthermore, it combines its marked spiritual effect with superb musical rhythm. (80:1-80:16)

INGRATITUDE

Human ingratitude to God and his denial of Him come up for discussion in the second part. Here a person is reminded of his origin; how his life is made easy; how God determines his death and resurrection; and how, after all this, he fails to carry out His orders: (80:17-80:23)

FOOD AND SUSTENANCE

The third part directs a person to reflect upon things of immediate concern to him, namely, his food. Absolute perfection of creation is obvious in the provision of food for us as it is obvious in the creation, proportioning and development of we ourselves: (80: 24-80:32)

THE DAY OF JUDGMENT

The final part touches upon "*the blare*" and its fearful effects.

The very sound of the words gives the impression of horror. It will make everyone unaware of anything around them. Our faces, however, provide a lucid account of what is happening to us. (80:33-80:42)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 80:1-80:42

WHO IS GOD?

It is God who gives rain water, who splits the earth so that it puts forth grain, grapevines, green fodder, olives, date palm trees and dense, fertile gardens and sweet fruits and whatever grows in and on the earth for us and our flocks. God created us from a seminal fluid, made our way easy and causes us to die and to live again. Once again He will revive us when He wills.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

There is a difference of opinion regarding who the Quran is speaking about in Signs 80:1-80:16. If to the Prophet, he is admonished for frowning and not giving proper attention to Ibn Umm Maktum, the blind man, when he approached the Prophet. The message makes clear that there is no blame on the Prophet.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

Depending on how one interprets 80:1-80:16, if one thinks that "him" (80:2) refers to the Quraysh chieftain who frowned and turned away from Ibn Umm Maktum, then, the Quranic message tells the ungrateful in the community not to be self-complacent.

The community at large is told that their deeds will be recorded by scribe-angels, ones who are exalted, purified, generous and kind. Those who deny the Quranic message are damned for their ingratitude. The Quran says that the human being does not finish what God has commanded of him. There will come the Day when he will run from his brother, his mother and father, his companion wife and children. Something else will preoccupy him on that Day.

There will be those who are happy and those who are not. Those who will not be happy are those who are ungrateful and who act immorally.

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN

Choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE STUDENTS•

What are some of the multiple viewpoints presented in these signs?

What relevant points of view have been ignored thus far?

Have you considered this issue from an opposing perspective?
Are you not open to changing your view?
Have you entered the opposing views in good faith, or only enough to find flaws in them?
Do you need to look at this from another perspective?
Do you need to consider another point of view?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I considered class time as a time in which I practiced thinking (within the subject) using the fundamental concepts and principles of the course.
I did not sit back passively, waiting for knowledge to fall into my head.

LESSON 25. CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY MAKING INTERPRETATIONS, INFERENCES, CONCLUSIONS, SOLUTIONS• (UNDERSTANDING)

We further develop our reasoning or discernment faculty by understanding how to make interpretations, inferences (a conclusion reached on the basis of evidence and reasoning) and/or conclusions based on the Quranic message.

Thinking differs from reasoning. Thinking is simply a succession of thoughts that are not necessarily related to one another. Reasoning, on the other hand is where one thought leads directly to another. When you actively engage in reasoning, it is called 'to infer' or to make inferences.

When you infer something from a Quranic sign from something else that it says, you move from the second thought back to the first thought because you infer that the second thought makes it reasonable for you to believe in the truth of the first thought.

Words that indicate that one thought supports another thought are called "inference indicators'. Some examples are: Since, thus, implies, consequently, because, it follows that or given that. Inference indicators may or may not be present in the Quranic signs.

In this section, the Quran asks a question: *What will cause you....* infers that you do not know so the Quran responds telling you what it is: *It is better than a thousand months....*? When you read signs 97:3-97:5 and you refer back to the question asked (97:2), you are "interpreting, inferring, arriving at conclusions" and the answer to the question is: The night of power. By asking a rhetorical question to which God does not expect an answer, the use of "cause" here is an "inference indicator." Who other than God can "cause" you to know something?

QURANIC CHAPTER 97: THE NIGHT OF POWER (AL-QADR) SIGNS 97:1-97:5

Makkah: *Truly, We caused it to descend*
on the night of power. (97:1)
And what will cause you to recognize
what is the night of power? (97:2)
The night of power is better than a thousand months. (97:3)
The angels come forth and the Spirit during it
with their Lord's permission, with every command. (97:4)
Peace it is until the time of the rising dawn.(97:5)

COMMENTARY°

A MOST DISTINGUISHED NIGHT

This chapter speaks about the promised great night which the whole universe marks with joy and prayer. It is the night of perfect communion between this world and the Supreme society. That night marked the beginning of the revelation of the Quran to Muhammad, an event unparalleled in the history of humanity for its splendor and the significance it has for the life of humanity as a whole. Its greatness is far beyond human perception: (97:1-97:3)

There is also the light of the angels and the Spirit moving between the earth and the Supreme society: *The angels come forth and the Spirit during it with their Lord's permission, with every command.* (97:4) In addition, there is also the light of dawn which the chapter represents as perfectly harmonious with the light of the Quran and the angels as well as with their spirit of peace: *Peace it is until the time of the rising dawn.* (97:5)

This means that the night of power marked the beginning of the revelation of the Quran to the Messenger and his mission of delivering it to humanity.

This night is too sublime for proper human perception: *And what will cause you to recognize what is the night of power?* (97:2) That night is great because of what the Quran includes: An ideology, a basis for values and standards and a comprehensive code of moral and social behavior, all of which promote peace within the human soul and in the world at large. It is great because of the descent of the angels, and Gabriel, in particular, by their Lord's leave, carrying the Quran. They fill all the space between heaven and earth in such a splendid, universal celebration, vividly portrayed in this chapter.

The Quranic method of education and character building links worship with faith and establishes truth in our hearts and consciences. By this method, worship is considered a means for maintaining full awareness of this truth, its clarification and firm establishment in our minds, hearts and souls. This method has been proved to be the best for the revival of this truth so that it has an unfailing influence on people's behavior. The theoretical understanding of this truth cannot, on its own and without worship, establish it or give it the necessary impetus for its operation in the life of the individual or society. This link between the anniversary of the night of power and its consecration in faith and devotion is a part of the successful and straightforward method of the Quranic message.

STUDENTS MAKING INFERENCES SHOULD•

Draw conclusions
Give meaning to data
Infer only what the evidence implies
Check inferences for their consistency with each other
Identify assumptions underlying your inferences.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 97:1-97:5

WHO IS GOD?

It is God who causes the night of power to descend.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quran itself asks Prophet Muhammad: What will cause you, Muhammad, to recognize what the night of power is?

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN

Choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

After reasoning (discerning) the main points, we can decide what the best answer or conclusion to the question is.

QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS•

What inferences, judgments or conclusions does this sign make?
What are my most fundamental inferences or conclusions based on this Quranic sign?
Here is the information.
How are you interpreting it?
What is it telling you?
What meaning would you give to it?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to take problems one by one, state each one clearly.
I studied the problem to make sure I knew what the problem was.
I figured out what things I had to do to solve it.
I was able to distinguish between problems over which I had control and ones over which I did not have control.

I was able to figure out the information I needed and I actively sought that information.

I carefully analyzed and interpreted the information I collected and was able to draw reasonable inferences from it.

I figured out what my options for action were and what I needed to do in the short term.

I figured out what my options for action were and what I needed to do in the long term.

I evaluated my options taking into account their advantages and disadvantages.

I adopted a strategic approach to the problem and followed through.

As I took action, implications began to emerge and I was ready to immediately change the strategy if necessary.

As more information became available, I was able to shift my strategy, analysis and/or statement of the problem when more information became available to me.

LESSON 26. CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY UTILIZING CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS, PRINCIPLES, MODELS AND VOCABULARY•

Quranic thinking offers us concepts and principles that help us analyze, assess and improve our thinking when we better understand the meanings of the Quranic signs.

What is a concept? A concept is an idea or thought, especially a generalized idea of a thing or of a class of things. The Quranic text expresses clusters of concepts or ideas as here with the multiple oaths that God swears by (91:1-91:8). It is these concepts that it uses that we need to learn to identify, contrast them with other of its concepts and clarify what they mean and what we include and exclude because of them.

What are principles? Principles express the relationship between concepts. What are the principle of these signs? Their relationship?

Quranic thinkers begin developing their reasoning or discernment faculty by understanding what it means to utilize concepts, definitions, principles, models and vocabulary.

QURANIC CHAPTER 91: THE SUN (AL-SHAMS) SIGNS 91:1-91:10

Makkah: *By the sun and its forenoon* (91:1)
and by the moon when it related to it (91:2)
and by the daytime when it displayed it (91:3)
and by the nighttime when it overcomes it (91:4)
and by the heaven and what built it (91:5)
and by the earth and what widened it (91:6)
and by the soul and what shaped it (91:7)
and, then, inspired it to its acting immorally and God-consciousness, (91:8)
he who made it pure prospered. (91:9)
Surely, is frustrated whoever seduced it. (91:10)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (91:11)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (91:12)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (91:13)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (91:14)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (91:15)

COMMENTARY°

THE RHYTHM OF THE SIGNS

This chapter, which maintains the same rhyme in all its signs and keeps the same musical beat throughout, starts with several aesthetic touches which seem to spring out from the surrounding uni-

verse and its phenomena. These phenomena form the framework which encompasses the great truth which is the subject matter of the chapter, namely, our human nature, his inherent abilities, choice of action, and responsibility in determining our own fate.

GOD'S SOLEMN OATH

By the sun and his morning brightness...: (91:1-91:10) God swears by these objects and universal phenomena as He swears by our human soul, how it is fashioned and the inspiration it receives. The oath gives these things an added significance and draws the human being's attention to them. We ought to contemplate these phenomena and try to appreciate their value and the purpose of their creation.

There exists in fact, some kind of a special language through which the human heart communicates with the universe. This language is part of our human nature. It is a language which does not use sounds and articulation. It is a communication to hearts and an inspiration to souls which come alive whenever we look up to the universe for an inspiring or cheerful sight. Therefore, the Quran frequently urges us to reflect upon our surroundings. It does this in various ways, sometimes directly and sometimes with hints, incidental touches and stimuli. In this case, for example, some phenomena of the universe are made the subject of God's oath, in order to serve as a framework for what follows in the chapter. These explicit directives and indirect hints are very frequent in the chapters of the present volume. There is hardly any chapter which does not encourage us, in one way or another, to communicate with the universe, in secret language, so that we may appreciate its signs and understand its address.

A LOOK INTO THE HUMAN SOUL

The chapter moves on to state the basic truth about the human being, and relates this truth to the various phenomena of the universe, for we are one of the most remarkable wonders in this harmonious creation: (91:7-91:10)

God has created us with a duality of nature and ability. What we mean by duality is that the two ingredients in our make-up, i.e. earth's clay and God' spirit, that forms within us two equal tendencies to good or evil, to either follow divine guidance or go astray. We are just as capable of recognizing the good as we are of recognizing the evil in everything we encounter, and we are equally capable of directing ourselves one way or the other. This dual ability is deeply ingrained within us. All external factors, like divine messages, only serve to awaken our ability and help us take its chosen way. In other

words, these factors do not create this innate ability. They only help it to develop.

In addition to his innate ability, we are equipped with a conscious faculty which determines our line of action. Therefore, we are responsible for our actions and decisions. We who use this faculty to strengthen our inclinations to what is good and to purify ourselves and to weaken our evil drive will be prosperous and successful. By contrast, a person who uses this faculty to suppress the good in him will ruin himself: *He who made it pure prospered. Surely, is frustrated whoever seduced it.* (91:9-9:10)

There must be, then, an element of responsibility attached to the human conscious faculty and freedom of choice. Since we are free to choose between our tendencies, our freedom must be coupled with responsibility. We are assigned a definite task related to the power given to him. But God, the Compassionate, does not leave us without guidance other than our natural impulses or our conscious, decision-making faculty. God helps us by sending us messages which lay down accurate and permanent criteria. He and points out the signs to us, within us and in the world at large, which should help us choose the right path and clear our way of any obstructions so that we can see the truth. Thus, we recognize our way easily and clearly and our conscious decision-making faculty functions in full knowledge of the nature of the direction it chooses and the implications of that choice.

From this very general outline of the Quranic concept of the human being emerges a number of vital and valuable facts: Firstly, that this concept elevates us to the high position of being responsible for our actions and allows us freedom of choice granted to us by God. Responsibility and freedom of choice, therefore, make us the honored creature of this world, a position worthy of the creature in whom God has blown something of His own spirit and raised above most of His creation

Secondly, it puts our human fate in our own hands and makes us responsible for it. This stimulates caution in us as well as a positive sense of fear of God. This is in itself a great responsibility which demands that one should always be alert.

Thirdly, it reminds us of our permanent need to refer to the criteria fixed by God in order to ensure that our desires do not get the better of us. Thus, we remain near to God, follow His guidance and illuminate our way by divine light. Indeed, the standard of purity we can achieve is limitless.

Links the Human Soul to the Universe

In conclusion, we say the chapter provides a link between the human soul, the basic facts of the universe, its constant and repetitive scenes and God's unfailing law of punishing tyrant transgressors. This He does according to His own wise planning which sets a time for everything and a purpose for every action. He is the Lord of man, the universe and fate.

Summary of Signs 91:1-91:10

How are the signs directed towards the Community?

These signs (91:1-91:10) are directed towards the community. The community is told that our soul is inspired to either act immorally or to develop God-consciousnessness. To act immorally frustrates and corrupts the soul while developing God-consciousness purifies and makes it prosper.

Students Summarize a Sign

Choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

Questions to Ask Students•

What do you think is the main issue in each of the Quranic examples?
Let me see if I understand you. Do you mean x or y?
How does this relate to our discussion (problem, issue)?
Could you give me an example?
Would this be an example?
Could you explain that further?
Would you say more about ht?
Why do you say that?
What do you think so-and-so meant by his remark?

Student Assessment

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I understood the concept in these signs of God's solemn oaths.
I understood the concept of the human soul in these signs.

LESSON 27. CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ARGUMENTS AND INTERPRETATIONS

Critical thinkers try to overlook their preconceptions when agreeing or disagreeing with a conclusion. They use tools of analysis to try to understand the reason behind the issue and to determine its relative strengths and weaknesses. One of the tools of analysis is to continue to ask for reasons and to consider other points of views.

They pay special attention to possible strong arguments with which they disagree because they are aware of the tendency to ignore, oversimplify, distort or otherwise unfairly dismiss them. They analyze questions and place conflicting arguments and interpretations in opposition to one another as a means of highlighting key concepts, assumptions, implications, and so forth.

When giving or being given an interpretation, we learn to recognize the difference between evidence and interpretation, explore the assumptions on which interpretations are based and propose and evaluate alternative interpretations for their relative strength. As autonomous thinkers, we consider competing theories and develop our own theories.

What arguments are the tyrants said to have against the Companions of the Ditch? Do you agree with the conclusion of the tyrants? Is this a case where you want to consider other points of view? Does the Quran give evidence for its conclusion?

QURANIC CHAPTER: THE CONSTELLATIONS (AL-BURUJ)
SIGNS 85:1-85:21

Makkah: *By the heaven*
possessing the constellations, (85:1)
by the promised Day, (85:2)
by ones who bear witness and ones who are witnessed, (85:3)
the Companions of the Ditch were slain, (85:4)
possessors of the fuel of the fire (85:5)
above which they were ones who sit, (85:6)
as they were, in what they accomplish
against the ones who believe,
ones who bore witness. (85:7)
And they sought revenge on them only because
they believe in God, The Almighty, The Worthy of Praise, (85:8)
Him to whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth.
And God is Witness over everything. (85:9)
Truly, those who persecuted the males,
ones who believe, and the females,

ones who believe, and again repent not after that,
for them is the punishment of hell
and for them is the punishment of the burning. (85:10)
Truly, those who believed and did
as the ones in accord with morality,
for them will be Gardens beneath which rivers run.
That will be the Great Triumph. (85:11)
Truly, the seizing by force by your Lord is severe. (85:12)
Truly, He causes to begin and He causes to return. (85:13)
And He is The Forgiving, The Loving, (85:14)
the Possessor of the Glorious Throne (85:15)
Achiever of what He wants. (85:16)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud and Pharaoh (85:17)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud and Pharaoh (85:18)
Nay! Those who were ungrateful are belying (85:19)
and God is One Who Encloses them from behind. (85:20)
Nay! It is a glorious Recitation (85:21)
inscribed on the Guarded Tablet.

COMMENTARY°

The immediate theme of the chapter is the ditch incident. It is said to have taken place in Ukhdud, five kilometers south of Najran in Arabia. It occurred around 520 or 523 CE, about fifty years before the birth of the Prophet.

***

When a community of believers who lived before the advent of the Quranic message, said to be unitarian Christians, were faced by ruthless and tyrannical enemies who sought to force them away from their faith. The believers refused. The tyrants then lit a great fire in a ditch they had dug, and threw them into it. The believers were thus burnt to death in front of large crowds that had gathered to witness this ghastly act of extermination. The tyrants sat by, amused by the believers' sufferings: *And they sought revenge on them only because they believe in God, The Almighty, The Worthy of Praise,* (85:8)

The chapter starts with an oath: *By the heaven possessing the constellations, by the promised Day, by ones who bear witness and ones who are witnessed, the Companions of the Ditch were slain,* (85:1-85:4) In this way the chapter links heaven and its magnificent constellations, the promised Day of Judgment and its great events, the multitudes which witness that day and the events they witness

with the ditch incident and God's anger with the aggressors responsible for it. The chapter then proceeds to portray the tragic scene in a few, quick flashes which demonstrate the horror without dwelling on detail.

It includes a reference to the greatness of faith which exalted itself over the tyrants' atrocious cruelty and triumphed over the fire, attaining a level of sublimity which is an honor to all humanity. It also refers to the heinous crime and the evil and injustice it involves in comparison with the sublimity, innocence and purity of the believers: *The Companions of the Ditch were slain, possessors of the fuel of the fire above which they were ones who sit, as they were, in what they accomplish against the ones who believe, ones who bore witness.* (85:4-85:7)

Then follows a series of short signs stating a number of principles which are highly important to the Quranic message, its outlook and advocacy. We have firstly a reference to the fact that all the heavens and earth are part of God's kingdom and to His witnessing of all that takes place in them. He is the Sovereign of the heavens and the earth, who witnesses all.

Secondly, we have a reference to the burning in hell which awaits the tyrants, and a reference to the perfect heavenly bliss which awaits the believers who choose faith over life and exalt themselves despite their persecution. The believers' action is referred to as the great triumph: *Truly, those who persecuted the males, ones who believe and the females, ones who believe and again repent not after that, for them is the punishment of hell and for them is the punishment of the burning. Truly, those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality, for them will be Gardens beneath which rivers run. That will be the Great Triumph.* (85:10-85:11)

A further reference is made to the power with which God smites His enemies and to the fact that He creates and brings back to life after death: *Truly, the seizing by force by your Lord is severe. Truly, He causes to begin and He causes to return.* (85:12-13) This relates directly to the lives blotted out in the pit incident.

The chapter then mentions some of the divine attributes, each of which has a specific relevance to the subject matter of the chapter: *And He is The Forgiving, The Loving,* (85:14) He forgives those who repent regardless of the enormity and horror of their sins. He also loves His servants who choose Him. His love is the soothing balsam which heals whatever injuries they may have suffered: *The Possessor of the Glorious Throne, Achiever of what He wants.* (85:15-16) These attributes portray God's absolute will, dominance and power, all of which are relevant to the event discussed in the chapter.

Finally, the chapter explains the situation of the ungrateful and that God surrounds them though they may be unaware of the fact. *Nay! Those who were ungrateful are belying and God is One Who Encloses them from behind.* (85:19-85:20) It concludes with a statement of the truth of the Quran and its blessed origin: *Nay! It is a glorious Recitation inscribed on the Guarded Tablet.* (85:21)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 85:1-85:21

WHO IS GOD?

Heaven and earth are part of God's Kingdom and His witnessing all that takes place. God strikes down tyrants, the ungrateful with inflated egos, even those who are heavily armed. God causes everything to begin and to return. He is The Forgiving, The Loving, Possessor of the Glorious Throne, Achiever of what He wants. The Quran is a glorious recitation inscribed on the Guarded Tablet. God encloses the tyrants from behind, that is, takes them unaware.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

Those who seek revenge against people only because those believe in God will roast in hell while believers will rest in heavenly bliss. This achievement by the believers is the Great Triumph. Those who persecuted believing males and believing females will be the fuel for the fire.

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN

Choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS•

What are the arguments given in the above signs?
What would someone who disagreed with these arguments say?

Be encouraged to argue back and forth, and modify your positions in light of the strengths of others' positions. You can become better able to evaluate reasoning by familiarizing yourselves with, and practicing:

EVALUATING REASONING BY:•

Using specific analytic techniques, such as making assumptions explicit and evaluating them
Clarifying issues, conclusions, values, and words
Developing criteria for evaluation
Recognizing and pinpointing contradictions
Distinguishing relevant from irrelevant facts
Evaluating evidence

Exploring implications.

After extended discussion, state your final positions. Be ready to qualify your claims appropriately.

QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS•

What does the Quranic message want to communicate? Why?
What is it talking about? What do I want to say about it?
What else do I want to say about it and why?
What else do I know or think about this?
How is what I am saying like and unlike what others have said?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I disagree with the interpretation reached by those who killed the Companions of the Ditch.
I learned the divine attributes mentioned in these signs.

LESSON 28. CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
MAKING PLAUSIBLE INFERENCES OR INTERPRETATIONS

Observation and information are the basis for sound conclusions. We learn to distinguish between what we observe from the Quranic signs and what we conclude as the commentary shows us the various interpretations of the fig and the olive. We delve into the facts given in the signs so find the implications as well as the concepts. We should know that every interpretation that is made is based on inference and that we interpret every situation in which we find ourselves.

QURANIC CHAPTER 95: THE FIG (AL-TIN)
SIGNS 95:1-95:8

Makkah: *By the fig and the olive* (95:1)
and by Mount Sinai (95:2)
and by this trustworthy land, (95:3)
truly, We have created the human being
of the fairer symmetry. (95:4)
Again, We returned him to the lowest of the low. (95:5)
But those who believed and did
as the ones in accord with morality,
for them is compensation, that which is unfailing. (95:6)
What will cause you to deny the Judgment after that? (95:7)
Is not God The Most Just of ones who judge? (95:8)

COMMENTARY°

God swears to the validity of this by the fig, tin, the olive, Mount Sinai, and the secure city of Makkah. The Mount in Sinai is the mountain on which Moses received his divine summons. The secure city is Makkah, which houses the Kabah, God's inviolable house. The relationship between the two on the one hand and religion and faith on the other is obvious. But a similar relationship is not readily clear with regard to the figs and olives. Suggestions as to the significance of these are numerous. It is said that the fig refers to the fig tree in heaven, with the leaves of which Adam and his wife, Eve, tried to cover their private parts. Another suggestion is that it refers to the place where the fig tree appeared on the mountain where Noah's ark landed.

As for the olive, it is suggested that it refers to the Mount in Jerusalem. It is also said that it refers to Jerusalem itself. Another suggestion is that it refers to the olive branch brought back by the

pigeon which Noah released from the ship to examine the state of the foods. When the pigeon brought back an olive branch, he knew that the land had reappeared and that vegetation was growing.

A different opinion posits that the fig and olive mentioned in the chapter are simply those two kinds of food with which we are familiar. Alternatively, it is claimed, they are symbols of growth out of land.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 95:1-95:8

WHO IS GOD?

God created the human being with the fairer symmetry and then returns the human being to the lowest of the low. God compensates those who believe and act in accord with morality with an unfailing compensation. God is the Most Just of ones who judge.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quran asks rhetorical questions (not expecting answers) that may be asked by others of the Prophet: What will cause **you**, Muhammad, to deny the Judgment? Is God not the Most Just of ones who judge?

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

Each individual is created by God in the fairer symmetry and then returns to the lowest of the low. For those who believe and at in accord with morality they will have an unfailing compensation.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

Based on my interpretations of this Chapter I was able to answer the questions:

*What will cause **you** to deny the Judgment after that?* (95:7)
Is not God The Most Just of ones who judge? (95:8)

LESSON 29. CRITICAL THINKING MORAL TRAIT PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS*

Perseverance is being willing and conscious of the need to pursue insights and truths despite difficulties, obstacles, and frustrations; a firm adherence to rational principles despite irrational opposition of others; a sense of the need to struggle with confusion and unsettled questions over an extended period of time in order to achieve deeper understanding or insight. This trait is undermined when teachers and others continually provide the answers, do their thinking for them or substitute easy tricks, algorithms, and short cuts for careful, independent thought.

Perseverance in goodness is an attribute of God: *And whatever you have of divine blessing is from God.* (16:53) and, therefore, it becomes the duty of every person to obey his own impulse to good: *And whoever volunteered good, then, truly, God is One Who is Responsive, Knowing.* (2:158) He should do good as God has been good to all: *do good even as God did good to you* (28:77) and love those who do good: *And do good. Truly, God loves the ones who are doers of good.* (2:195) Believers hasten in every good work. As all prophets were quick in emulating good works, (21:90) so all people are advised to strive together (as in a race) towards all that is good : *Be forward, then, in good deeds.* (2:148) and virtuous. All good things are for the believers; goodly reward in the hereafter and highest grace of God awaits those who are foremost in good deeds: *some of them are ones who take the lead with good deeds by permission of God. That is the greater grace.*(35:32) Believers are advised to repel evil with what is better, for thereby enmity will change into warm friendship: *Drive back with what is fairer. Then, behold he who between you and between him was enmity as if he had been a protector, a loyal friend.* (41:34)

It is often reflective in that we have to go back and think about similar problems that we had faced before and re-analyze them. We do not let difficulties, obstacles and frustrations stop us from pursuing truths with our insight (the capacity to gain an accurate and deep intuitive understanding of a person or thing).

Perseverance can be developed by reviewing and discussing the kinds of difficulties that were inherent in previous problems worked on, exploring why it is necessary to struggle with them over an extended period.

We should come to see mental struggle as crucial to Quranic learning by discovering its reward in genuine understanding. We should have some experiences slowly reading difficult Quranic signs or sections. Prove to ourselves that if we are careful and stick to it, examining it one word, phrase, and sentence at a time, we can master it. Such in-depth reading can be done as a class, sentence by sentence, with us interpreting and explaining as we go.

The Quraysh at the time of the Prophet persevered with their commercial trade routs and became successful businessmen. The Quran here is reminding

them that they need to recognize the benefits and blessings that God provided them and worship the One God instead of worshipping idols that they themselves had created.

Perseverance in goodness is to reconize that everything comes from God including our ability to persevere and the good things which we have been provided.

QURANIC CHAPTER 106: THE QURAYSH (AL-QURAYSH) SIGNS 106:1-106:4

Makkah: *For the solidarity of the Quraysh,* (106:1)
their solidarity is the winter and the summer travel. (106:2)
Let them worship the Lord of this House (106:3)
Who fed them against hunger
and secured them against fear. (106:4)

COMMENTARY°

LEST THEY FORGET

The Elephant incident had an added effect in greatly enhancing the sanctity of the Kabah amongst the Arabs all over the Peninsula. It also strengthened the position of the Quraysh, the custodians of the Kabah , in all Arabia. They were thus able to travel far and wide in peace and security. Wherever they went they met with generosity and high esteem. This encouraged them to establish two great routes for their commercial caravans, to the Yemen in the south and to Syria in the north. They organized two enormous trading expeditions; one to the Yemen in winter and the other to Syria in summer.

God reminds them of these graces in order that they may be ashamed of their submission to other beings, while He is the Lord of the Kabah . God says to them in effect: for this tradition of the Quraysh, namely their winter and summer trips, let them submit to the Lord of this Kabah who guaranteed their security and so encouraged them to take such beneficial journeys. (106:3-106:4) As their land was infertile, they would have starved had it not been for the sustenance supplied by God. *And secured them against fear.* Poor as they were, and living in an insecure surroundings, their life would have been one of fear and apprehension. But God granted them security and allayed their fear.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 106:1-106:4

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The entire chapter refers to the Quraysh whereby God reminds them of

the blessings He has given them.

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN

Choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS•

What was it like to not understand or be able to do it?
How did you come to understand it?
What was that like?
Was it worth it?
Did it seem worth it at the time?
What made you change your mind?

Choose one moral trait—persevering in goodness, empathic altruism, courage, humility and repentance, etc.—to strive for each month, focusing on how you can develop that trait in yourselves. For example, concentrating on humility, begin to notice when we admit you are wrong. Notice when you refuse to admit you are wrong, even in the face of glaring evidence that you are in fact wrong. Notice when you become defensive when another person tries to point out a deficiency in your work, or your thinking. Notice when your arrogance keeps you from learning, for example, when you say to themselves:

I already know everything I need to know about this subject.
Or: I know as much as he does.
Who does he think he is forcing his opinions on me?

By owning their 'ignorance,' they can begin to deal with it.

O those who believed! Pray for help with patience and formal prayer. Truly, God is with the ones who remain steadfast. (2:153)

WRONG-DOING*

The Quran denounces the obstacle to persevering in goodness which is wrong-doing i. e., doing wrong as the Quraysh example shows. The Quran forbids—all shameful and evil deeds and uses a very comprehensive term, *zulm*, to cover them all. The Quran refers to Satanic tendencies in the human being such as ungratefulness (7:10), hastiness (16:37), impatience (70:19-70:21), despair, and unbelief in times of adversity, and pride and conceit in times of prosperity (11:9-11:10); quarrelsomeness (16:4), arrogance (75:31-75:40), greed of ever more and yet more (74:15), miserliness (17:100), transgression of the bounds of propriety and false sense of self sufficiency: *No indeed! The human being is, truly, defiant. He considered himself self-suffi-*

cient. (96:6) These tendencies often lead to different forms of wrong-doing and, therefore, must be counteracted by all right-thinking people.

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE STUDENTS•

Will the support seem to the reader to justify the conclusion?
Should I change the conclusion, or beef up the support?
What counter-examples or problems would occur to the reader here?
What do I want to say about them?
How am I interpreting my Quranic source?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I chose one moral trait to strive for in one month.
I focused on how I can develop that positive trait in myself.
I recognized that I was becoming defensive when someone tried to point out a deficiency in my thinking.
I owned up to my own ignorance on the moral trait and began to deal with it.

LESSON 30. CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL STANDARD LOGIC, BEING REASONABLE

The Quranic signs have their own logic. Events do not just happen. Events described in the sacred text make sense within their meanings. Questions should be asked with a method to them. Figure out the logic behind the sign (*ayah*) or signs (*ayat*). Your answers should always reference particular Quranic signs. How you learn to support your answers by giving reasons and references to the sign(s) is important, not any specific answer that you give.

In many cases, Quranic learning has been through rote memorization and drills based on having memorized the signs. When you learn through this method, you are not logically informed as to what the Quranic signs are saying. You are learning only by association or rote memorization without connecting the revelation to how you think or how you chose to live your life.

As a result, you learn to think of the Quranic text as something you simply memorize without ever understanding the meaning of what it says. In doing so, you do not integrate the meanings of the Quranic message into your lives, you do not "own" it. You rarely relate, that is, make relevant, what you have memorized to your own experience nor are you able to critique each by means of the other. You rarely try to test by making it a part of your everyday life. You rarely ask questions such as:

> Why is this so? How does this relate to what I already know?
> How does this relate to what I am learning in other classes?

With this method of memorization of the sacred text, very few of us ever think that we need to implement what we are learning in our life nor have we learned how to do so.

> The Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge espoused with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression (*al-tafaqquh fi'l-din*), that is, understands the religion, signifying a rational and inquisitive approach to constructing a worldview of Islam. Islam, in other words, advises analytical knowledge and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely dogmatic approach. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions: Faith based on detailed analysis (*al-iman al-tafsilli*) as opposed to undigested and uncomprehended faith (*al-iman al-ijmali*). The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the clerics of all the leading schools of thought.... (See Introduction) In the case of Chapter 101, a detailed analysis can be done of the description the Quran gives of The Disaster.

DEALING WITH EGOCENTRISM•

While we may have some egocentric thinking, it is referred to in the Quran as thinking exemplified by Iblis and Pharaoh, among others. Pharaoh told Moses that he, Pharaoh, was the Lord to be worshipped.

Then, Pharaoh said: I am your lofty lord. (79:24)

It is found in the disposition in human nature to think with an automatic subconscious bias in favor of oneself. On a daily basis, we can begin to observe our egocentric thinking in action.

Once we identify egocentric thinking in operation, we can then work to replace it with more rational thought through systematic self-reflection.

If we find that we continually conclude that a rational person would behave just as we behaved, we are probably engaging in self-deception.

QURANIC CHAPTER 101: THE DISASTER (AL-QARIAH) SIGNS 101:1-101:11

The chapter refers to Judgment Day when people will be distracted and the landmarks of this world will be lost, but every deed will be weighed in a just balance, and find its real value and setting.

Makkah: *The Disaster!* (101:1)
What is the Disaster? (101:2)
And what will cause you to recognize
what the Disaster is? (101:3)
On a Day humanity will be like dispersed moths (101:4)
and the mountains will be like plucked wool clusters. (101:5)
Then, for him whose balance was heavy will be (101:6)
one whose life is pleasant, well-pleasing. (101:7)
But he whose balance was made light, (101:8)
his abode of rest will be the pit. (101:9)
What will cause you to recognize what it is? (101:10)
It is a hot fire. (101:11)

COMMENTARY°

DETERMINATION OF PEOPLE'S FATES

Al-Qariah, or the Disaster, refers to the resurrection. Elsewhere in the Quran it is given names such as the Overwhelming One, the Deafening Shout, the Stunning Blast and the Enveloper. The term *al-Qariah* also connotes hitting and knocking hard. It knocks peoples' hearts with its engulfing horror.

The chapter as a whole deals with the Disaster, its essence, what takes place in it and what it eventually leads to. Thus the chapter portrays one of the scenes of the Day of Resurrection.

The scene portrayed here is one of horror directly affecting us and mountains. In this scene people look dwarfish in spite of their great number. For they are like scattered moths. They fly here and there having no power or weight, going through the dilemma of moths which rush to destruction, having no aim or purpose. On the other hand, the mountains, which used to be firm and solidly based, seem to be like carded wool carried away by winds, and even by a light breeze. Thus, it is in harmony with this image that the Day of Resurrection is described as the one that strikes or knocks out. The connotations used and the rhythm are in consonance with the effects of the Disaster on both people and mountains. The chapter spreads an air of awe and expectation about the outcome of reckoning.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 101:1-101:11

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

Prophet Muhammad is asked two similar questions about the Disaster (which is the name of the chapter): What will cause you, Muhammad, to recognize what the Disaster is? What will cause you to recognize what it is?

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The community is told that those whose balance of good deeds is heavy will have a pleasant, well-pleasing life while those whose balance of good deeds is light, will rest in the fire.

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE STUDENTS•

What does it mean to be a monotheist?
How would explain these signs to someone else?
Does what you say follow from the evidence that the signs give?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I knew that I had connected the Quranic message when I was able to tell someone in my own words what these signs say.

LESSON 31(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY RECOGNIZING CONTRADICTIONS

Consistency is a fundamental—some would say the defining—ideal of critical thinkers. They strive to remove contradictions from their beliefs, and are wary of contradictions in others. As would-be fair-minded thinkers they strive to judge like cases in a like manner. Perhaps the most difficult form of consistency to achieve is that between word and deed. Even though many of us may believe in the Day of Resurrection, when our words expressing belief are not consistent with our actions, this is a sign of a contradiction. Self-serving double standards are one of the most common problems in human life. Children are in some sense aware of the importance of consistency when they ask their parents: Why don't I get to do what you get to do? They are frustrated by double standards, yet are given little help in getting insight into them and dealing with them.

Critical thinkers can pinpoint specifically where opposing arguments or views contradict each other, distinguishing the contradictions from compatible beliefs, thus focussing their analyses of conflicting views such as being a Muslim, but not believing or practicing his or her faith with an eye to the Day of Resurrection.

When discussing conflicting lines of reasoning, inconsistent versions of the same story, or egocentric reasoning or behavior, Quranic critical thinkers can be encouraged to bring out both views and practice recognizing contradictions as the example to follow shows.

Here we present two different translations of Quranic signs for a classroom discussion. The Quranic message and Islam, in general, encourages marriage and discourages divorce. Discuss your views on the two different versions and if you interpret a contradiction between the signs 4:34 and 2:231.

Men are upholders and maintainers of women by virtue of that in which God has favored some of them above others and by virtue of their spending from their wealth. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient, guarding in (their husband's) absence what God has guarded. As for those from whom you fear discord and animosity, admonish them, then leave them in their beds, then strike them. Then if they obey you, seek not a way against them. Truly God is Exalted, Great. (4:34, ***The Study Quran***)

Men are supporters of wives because God gave some of them an advantage over others and because they spent of their wealth. So the females, ones in accord with morality, are the females,ones who are morally obligated and the females, ones who guard the unseen of what God kept safe. And those females whose resistance you fear, then admonish them (f) and abandon them (f) in their sleeping places and go away from them (f). Then if they (f) obeyed

you, then look not for any way against them (f). Truly, God had been Lofty, Great. (4:34, ***The Sublime Quran***)

When you have divorced women and they have fulfilled their term, keep them honorably or release them honorably, and do not keep them so as to cause harm and thus transgress. Whosoever does that surely wrongs himself. And do not take God's sings in mockery, and remember God's Blessing upon you, and what He sent down to you of the Book and Wisdom, exhorting you thereby. And reverence God, and know that God is Knower of all things. (2:231, ***The Study Quran***)

When you divorced wives, and they (f) reached their (f) term, then, hold them (f) back as one who is honorable or set them (f) free as one who is honorable. But hold them (f) not back by injuring them so that you commit aggression. And whoever commits that, then, surely, he did wrong himself. And take not to yourselves the signs of God in mockery. Remember the divine blessing of God on you, and what He caused to descend to you from the Book and wisdom. He admonishes you with it. And be Godfearing of God and know that God is Knowing of everything. (2:231, ***The Sublime Quran***)

After this study in possible contradictions created through interpretation of Quranic signs, we turn to the Quranic chapter for this lesson where we find a contradiction between thought and deed of those who want to act immorally and yet ask: *When is this Day of Resurrection?* The Quran explains what will happen that Day. It says that those who wanted to act immorally will face the contradiction between their words and deeds by asking: *Where is the place to run to?* The Quran says: *There is no refuge from it so follow the Recitation (al_Quran).*

QURANIC CHAPTER 75: THE RESURRECTION (AL-QIYAMAH) SIGNS 75:1-75:31

Makkah: *I swear an oath*
by the Day of Resurrection. (75:1)
And I swear an oath by the reproaching soul. (75:2)
Assumes the human being
that We will never gather his bones? (75:3)
Yea! We are ones who have power
to shape his fingers again. (75:4)
Nay! The human being
wants to act immorally when faced with it. (75:5)
He asks: When is this Day of Resurrection? (75:6)
But when their sight will be astonished (75:7)

and the moon will cause the earth to be swallowed (75:8)
and the sun and the moon will be gathered, (75:9)
the human being will say on that Day:
Where is a place to run away to? (75:10)
No indeed! There is no refuge. (75:11)
*With **your** Lord on this Day will be **your** recourse.* (75:12)
The human being will be told on that Day what he put forward
and what he postponed. (75:13)
Nay! The human being is clear evidence against himself. (75:14)
And although he would cast his excuses, (75:15)
*impel not **your** tongue to hasten it.* (75:16)
Truly, on Us is his amassing and its Recitation. (75:17)
*But when We recited it, follow **you** its Recitation.* (75:18)
From Us after that is its clear explanation. (75:19)
No indeed! Nay! You love that which hastens away (75:20)
and forsake the world to come. (75:21)
Faces on that Day will be ones that beam, (75:22)
ones that look towards their Lord. (75:23)
And faces on that day will be ones that scowl. (75:24)
***You** will think that against them is wreaked*
a crushing calamity. (75:25)
No indeed! When it reached the collar bones at death (75:26)
and it was said: Where is one who is a wizard to save me? (75:27)
And he thought it to be his parting (75:28)
and one leg was intertwined with the other leg, (75:29)
*that Day he will be driving toward **your** Lord* (75:30)
for He established not the true nor invoked blessings. (75:31)

COMMENTARY°

RHYTHM OF THE SIGNS

Chapter 75 puts forward such a great number of truths, scenes, images, special effects, tones and touches that no attentive heart can easily handle or escape from them. Furthermore, its distinctive style and musical cadence also combine to enhance its effect and bring it to a level that is again difficult to resist or to shed. It starts with two short signs with distinctive notes about the Day of Resurrection and the self-reproaching soul: *I swear an oath by the Day of Resurrection. And I swear an oath by the reproachful soul.* (75:1-75:2)

OUR SOUL AND THE DAY OF RESURRECTION

The essential difficulty for the ungrateful was that they could not imagine that bones becoming dust and being swallowed by the

earth could then be gathered together again to bring a human being back to life. This is also most probably true of some people today! The chapter responds to this sort of thinking, confirming that putting everyone's bones back together will assuredly take place: *Yea! We are ones who have power to shape his fingers again.* (75:4)

It is worth noting here that every expression in the chapter thus far is short and quick: The signs, the endings, the rhythm, the images and the reckoning process. This appears to be a response to our attempt to disregard the whole idea of the Day of Reckoning and to think that it is too far off.

Then come the four signs giving the Prophet special instruction as regards the way he received Quranic revelations: *Impel not your tongue to hasten it. Truly, on Us is his amassing and its Recitation. But when We recited it, follow you its Recitation. From Us after that is its clear explanation.* (75:16-75:19)

The scenes painted so far of the- Day of Judgment and its great upheavals and divergent fates derive their effect from the truth they represent and the Quran's own powerful style, bringing them alive before us. (75:22-75:25)

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE STUDENTS•

What do the different signs say?
Are the two consistent or contradictory?
Why do you say so?
What behavior would have been consistent with their words?
What words would have been consistent with their behavior?
Do 4:34 and 2:231 contradict each other?

When arguing opposing views, you should find points of agreement and specify points of dispute or contradiction.

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE STUDENTS•

What does each sign (4:23 and 2:231) say? Could both views be true?
Why or why not? If one is true, must the other be false?
Where, exactly, do these views contradict each other?
On what do they agreer?
What is it about that view that you think is false?
Do you accept this claim? That one?
On what question does your disagreement turn?
What, exactly, is it in this view that you doubt or disagree with?
The class can explore possible ways to reconcile apparent contradictions.
Could someone hold both of these views?
How might someone argue that someone can believe both?

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 75:1-75:31

WHO IS GOD?

God swears an oath that there will be a Day of Resurrection and that human beings are endowed with a reproaching soul (*nafs al-lawwamah*). God has the power to gather the bones of human beings and to shape their fingers again. On that Day, He will cause the moon to swallow the earth and the sun and moon to be gathered. God amasses this Day what is put forward and the Recitation. God will offer a clear explanation of the Recitation.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

Recourse that Day is only with Muhammad's Lord. While there will be those who make excuses, Muhammad should not impel his tongue to hasten its coming. With his Lord is the recourse. He is told to follow the Recitation. He will see the crushing calamity wreaked on the ungrateful as they are driving towards Muhammad's Lord.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

There are those who assume that their bones will never be gathered and their fingers re-shaped again because they do not believe that God has the power to do this. Instead of believing, these ungrateful people want to act immorally when faced with the concept that there will be a Day of Resurrection. There will be those who will make excuses for their deeds.

Such a person asks: When is this Day? Once that Day comes, these people will ask: Where is a place to run away? Then they will know that there is no refuge. To God is what this person amasses. People like this love that which hastens away (the temporary) and forsake the world to come (the permanent). When in the throes of death, when their legs are intertwined together, these people will ask who can save them.

Everyone will be told on that Day what he put forward and what he postponed. Each is clear evidence against himself. There will be faces that beam on that Day as they look towards their Lord and the faces of others will scowl.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I found this lesson to be an excellent study in determining contradictions.

It was important for me to understand that God told the Prophet to follow the Recitation (*al-Quran*).

LESSON 31(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
NOTING SIGNIFICANT SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

Quranic critical thinkers try to treat things that are similar in a similar way and things that are different in a different way. Uncritical thinkers tend not to see the significant similarities and differences. It often is the case that things that appear to be superficially similar are often significantly different and things that appear to be superficially different are often essentially the same. It takes practice to be able to distinguish between the two. As this sensitivity develops, it influences how we experience, how we describe, how we categorize, and how we reason about things. We become more careful and discriminating in our use of words and phrases.

Quranic signs often call on us to compare and contrast two or more things—objects, ideas, phenomena, etc. To merely list similarities and differences has little value in itself. Rather than making such lists, these activities should be proposed in a context which narrows the range of pertinent comparisons and requires some use be made of them in pursuit of some specific goal. For example, if comparing and contrasting two social practices (marriage and divorce), we should use our understanding to illuminate the relationship between them. Thus, only those points which shed light on the particular problem need be mentioned, and each point has implications to be drawn out and integrated into a broader picture.

Here are the two examples of different translations of two Quranic signs we studied in the previous lesson in regard to contradictions. Now we look at them in terms fo similarities and differences to compare and discuss in relationship to the Quranic views on marriage and divorce:

Men are upholders and maintainers of women by virtue of that in which God has favored some of them above others and by virtue of their spending from their wealth. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient, guarding in (their husband's) absence what God has guarded. As for those from whom you fear discord and animosity, admonish them, then leave them in their beds, then strike them. Then if they obey you, seek not a way against them. Truly God is Exalted, Great. (4:34, *The Study Quran*)

Men are supporters of wives because God gave some of them an advantage over others and because they spent of their wealth. So the females, ones in accord with morality, are the females,ones who are morally obligated and the females, ones who guard the unseen of what God kept safe. And those females whose resistance you fear, then admonish them (f) and abandon them (f) in their sleeping places and go away from them (f). Then if they (f) obeyed you, then look not for any way against them (f). Truly, God had been Lofty, Great. (4:34, *The Sublime Quran*)

When you have divorced women and they have fulfilled their term, keep them honorably or release them honorably, and do not keep them so as to cause harm and thus transgress. Whosoever does that surely wrongs himself. And do not take God's sings in mockery, and remember God's Blessing upon you, and what He sent down to you of the Book and Wisdom, exhorting you thereby. And reverence God, and know that God is Knower of all things. (2:231, *The Study Quran*)

When you divorced wives, and they (f) reached their (f) term, then, hold them (f) back as one who is honorable or set them (f) free as one who is honorable. But hold them (f) not back by injuring them so that you commit aggression. And whoever commits that, then, surely, he did wrong himself. And take not to yourselves the signs of God in mockery. Remember the divine blessing of God on you, and what He caused to descend to you from the Book and wisdom. He admonishes you with it. Be Godfearing of God and know that God is Knowing of everything. (2:231, *The Sublime Quran*)

The Quran warns those who do not accept the message from Prophet Muhammad. They are similar in that God created both from a *sperm-drop, a clot,* but unlike the blessed Prophet, they walk *arrogantly* upon the earth and they do not believe that the One who created them and shaped them has Power to give life to the dead.

QURANIC CHAPTER 75: THE RESURRECTION (AL-QIYAMAH) SIGNS 75:32-75:40

Makkah: *And he denied and turned away.* (75:32)
He went to his people again, going arrogantly. (75:33)
Woe to you! And woe to you! (75:34)
Again woe to you! And woe to you! (75:35)
Assumes the human being that he will be left aimless? (75:36)
Was he not a sperm-drop to be emitted in seminal fluid? (75:37)
Again, he had been a clot
and He created him and shaped him. (75:38)
Then, He made of him two pairs, the male and the female. (75:39)
Is not that One Who Has Power over that
able to give life to the dead? (75:40)

COMMENTARY°

ARROGANT REJECTION

By contrast, we have an image of those bent on denying the truth. They do not prepare for the inevitable end by doing something

in obedience of God. Rather, they arrogantly indulge in disobedience and sin: (75:32-75:33)

Woe to you! And woe to you! (75:34) *Again woe to you! And woe to you!* (75:34-75:35) The chapter uses here an idiom, *awla laka fa awla*, which implies a strong threat and repeats it twice. Therefore the translation expresses the implied meaning.

The history of the divine message is full of people who forgot God and His power, of those who feel their own power, relying on tribes, forces and authority, thinking that all these will give them protection. Then such people are taken away like a fly or a mosquito. Remember then, when the time of death comes it cannot be put forward or backward by even a fraction of a second.

As the chapter draws to its conclusion, it presents another truth from this world that carries a clear pointer to God's design of human life as also to the life to come: (75:36-75:40)[5]

QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS•

What does this remind you of? Why?
How are the translations similar? Different?
How important are the differences? Why?
What does this tell us about our topic? How useful is that comparison?
Can anyone think of an even more useful comparison?

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE STUDENTS•

What conclusions am I coming to?
Is my inference logical?
Are there other conclusions I should consider?
Does this interpretation make sense?
Does our solution necessarily follow from the facts?
How did you reach that conclusion?
What are you basing your reasoning on?

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 75:32-75:40

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS AN INDIVIDUAL?

It has been recorded that these signs (75:32-75:40) in section 2 of Chapter 75 were revealed in regard to Abu Jahl who was continuously ridiculing the Prophet and the believers in his arrogance.

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN

Choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I tried using writing as a way to learn by writing summaries in my own words of important points from the Quranic signs here.

I was able to formulate test questions.

I wrote out answers to my own questions.

I was able to get in touch with my emotions.

I learned that whenever I feel some negative emotion, I ask myself: What, exactly, is the thinking leading to this emotion?

For example, if I are angry, ask myself, what is the thinking that is making me angry?

What other ways could I think about this situation?

For example, can I think about the situation so as to see the humor in it and what is pitiable in it? If I can, concentrate on that thinking and my emotions, I will (eventually) shift to match them.

LESSON 32. CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY COMPARING ANALOGOUS SITUATIONS: REFRAMING INSIGHTS TO NEW CONTEXTS

The power of a Quranic concept is not limited by the ability we have to use it. Quranic thinkers make use of concepts in order to better their skills in understanding the Quran. It is through practice that we use these concepts by applying them to new situations, that is, by putting the concepts into practice.

Many of the wealthy early Muslims such as Khadija or Abu Bakr did not count their wealth over and over again. They reframed how they used their wealth by giving it to the Islamic movement or by freeing slaves.

Quranic thinkers focus on the basic Quranic concepts. We are encouraged to be able to reframe Quranic concepts, taking the Quranic form and changing the contents in modeling what Prophet Muhammad did as another example that follows.

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>
> Quranic thinkers focus on the basic Quranic concepts. We are encouraged to be able to reframe Quranic concepts, taking the Quranic form and changing the contents in modeling what Prophet Muhammad did as another example:
>
> The Prophet would preserve the form, the container of a custom or idea which had deep roots in society, one which people had gotten used to from generation to generation and one which was practiced in a natural manner, but he changed the contents, the spirit, the direction and the practical application of customs in a revolutionary, decisive and immediate manner.
>
> He was inspired by a particular method that he used in social combat. Without producing negative results, without containing any of the weak points of the other methods, his method contained the positive characteristics of the others. Through the customs of society that apply the brakes, he quickly attained his social goals. His revolutionary method was this: He maintained the container of a social tradition, but changed the contents.
>
> He used this method in reconciling social phenomena. He adopted a process and method that is a model for all problem solving. This method can be applied to two problems or two phenomena that in no way resemble each other. Recognizing how important this method is, we cannot fully explore it here. We can only clarify it by a few examples.
>
> Before Islam, there was a custom of total ablution that was both a belief and a superstition. The pre-Islamic Arabs believed that when a person had sexual intercourse, he or she incarnated jinn (spirits

which inhabit the earth), thereby rendering both body and soul unclean. Until he or she found water and performed a total ablution, the jinn could not be exorcised.

Another example is the pilgrimage to Makkah. Before Islam, it was an Arab custom, full of superstitious ancestor worship. It was a glorified type of idol worship, holding economic advantage for the Quraysh tribe whereby the Kabah was filled with idols that were worshiped by the people. It had gradually come to assume this form from the time of Abraham. The Prophet was commanded to keep the form of the pre-Islamic custom of pilgrimage, as Abraham, the Friend of God, had built the Kabah for the worship of the One God, but through God's guidance, he changed the content. Now the pilgrimage was practiced to worship the One God.

The basis of the pilgrimage had been twofold: To protect the economic interests of the Quraysh merchants in Makkah and to create an artificial need among the Arab tribes for the Quraysh nobility. It was revealed to the Prophet of Islam to take this form and change it into a most beautiful and deep rite founded upon the unity of God and the oneness of humanity.

The Prophet, with his revolutionary stand, took the pilgrimage of the idol-worshipping tribes and changed it into a completely opposite rite. It was a revolutionary leap. As a result, while the Quraysh leaders opposed him because of their concern that they would lose their means of income, the Arab people underwent no anguish, no loss of values or beliefs, but rather, revived the truth and cleansed an ancient custom. They moved easily from idol worship to unity. Suddenly, they had left the past. Their society was not aware that the foundations of idol worship had been torn down. This leap, this revolutionary social method found within the (Quranic Sunnah) of the Prophet preserved the outer form, but changed its content. It maintained the container as a permanent element but changed and transformed the content. The Prophet, through the inspired method of his work, showed us that if we understand and can put his method into action, we can behave in a most enlightened and correct way.

A clear-visioned intellectual, confronted by outdated customs, ancient traditions, a dead culture and a stagnant religious and social order, takes up the mandate of the Prophet rather than submit to prejudices from the past. By this method one can reach revolutionary goals without the danger of revolution, on one hand, and without opposing the basis of faith and ancient social values on the other. By doing so, one does not remove oneself from people, nor does one become a stranger on whom people may turn and condemn. This method works because the Prophet received knowledge from the di-

vine Infinite, because he asked for the help of revelation and because he made use of what he received.[6]

QURANIC CHAPTER 104: THE SLANDERER (AL-HUMAZAH)
SIGNS 104:1-104:9

Makkah: *Woe to every slandering backbiter* (104:1)
who gathered wealth and counted it over and over! (104:2)
He assumes that his wealth made him immortal. (104:3)
No indeed! He will be cast forth into the Crusher. (104:4)
And what will cause you to recognize
what the Crusher is? (104:5)
It is the fire of God, that which is kindled eternally, (104:6)
that peruses the minds, (104:7)
that which will be closing in on them (104:8)
with its pillars, ones that are outstretched. (104:9)[7]

COMMENTARY°

DESPICABLE CHARACTER

This chapter portrays a real scene from the early days of the Quranic message, yet the same scene is repeated in every environment and society. It shows a vile, mean person who is given wealth and who uses it to tyrannize others. He thinks that wealth is the supreme value in life, before which all other values and standards come toppling down. He feels that since he possesses wealth, he controls other people's destiny without being accountable for his own deeds. He imagines that his money and his wealth is a god, capable of everything without exception, even of resisting death, making him immortal and stopping God's judgment and His retribution.

A wicked vanity is let loose within him driving him to mock other people's positions and dignity, to taunt and slander them. He criticizes others verbally, mocks them with his gestures, either by imitating their movements and voices or by ridiculing their looks and features, by words and mimicry, by taunt and slander.

QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS•

Was Prophet Muhammad in a position to know?
What would someone need to be in a position to know?
Could the Prophet have directly seen or heard, or would he have to have reasoned to what he knew?
What do we know about the Prophet's expertise and experience?
What experience would you need to have to be an expert?

What must you have studied?
What does he claim about this issue?
Where did he get his information?
Is there reason to doubt him?
Has he been reliable in the past?
Does he have anything to gain by convincing others?

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 104:1-104:9

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

God asks Prophet Muhammad: What will cause you, Muhammad, to recognize what the Crusher is?

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS AN INDIVIDUAL?

The Quranic message condemns every slandering backbiter who gathers wealth and counts it over and over. This person assumes that his wealth has made him immortal. He should think again because God is going to cast him forth into the Crusher.

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN

Choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to understand how the Prophet reframed the pilgrimage.
I realized that the Prophet was in a position to know how to reframe the pilgrimage as he had been taught by the Quran.

LESSON 33(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY DEVELOPING ONE'S PERSPECTIVE: CREATING OR EXPLORING ARGUMENTS•

The world is not given to us sliced up into categories with pre-assigned labels on them. There are always many ways to "divide up" and so experience the world. How we do so is "essential to our thinking and behavior."

Uncritical thinkers assume that their perspective on things is the only correct one.

Selfish critical thinkers manipulate the perspectives of others to gain advantage for themselves.

Fair-minded critical thinkers learn to recognize that their own way of thinking and that of all other perspectives are some combination of insight and error. They learn to develop their point of view through a critical analysis of their experience. They learn to question commonly accepted ways of understanding things and avoid uncritically accepting the viewpoints of their peer groups or society. They know what their perspectives are and can talk insightfully about them. To do this, they must create and explore their own beliefs, their own reasoning, and their own theories instead of denying the Quranic message.

Perspective is developed through extended thought, discussion, and writing just as the signs below (77:1-77:40) describe the fate on the Day of Decision of those who deny. The signs extend our thoughts, open our inner world to "discussion" within our self and write the sacred words in order to develop our perspective about the Day of Decision. The signs argue in detail what the consequences are for those who deny that there will be a Day of Decision.

The signs give those of us who are unsure, a time to reflect before we come to conclusions. Those of us who, based on our life experiences, already have definite conclusions about the Day of Decision can, with these signs, consider ideas of other perspectives, that is, the perspective of those who deny. All of us can answer questions about what we think as we reflect on new situations. We can compare what we say we believe with how we act.

QURANIC CHAPTER 77: THE ONES WHO ARE SENT (AL-MURASALAT)
SIGNS 77:1-77:40

Makkah: *By ones who are sent successively,* (77:1)
by the storm and raging tempest, (77:2)
by that which causes vegetation to revive, unfolding (77:3)
by the ones who separate a separating (77:4)
by ones who cast a remembrance (77:5)
as excusing or warning, (77:6)

truly, what you are promised will be that which falls. (77:7)
Then, when the stars will be obliterated (77:8)
and when the heaven will be cleaved asunder (77:9)
and when the mountains will be scattered (77:10)
and when the time will be set for the Messengers, (77:11)
for which Day were these appointed? (77:12)
For the Day of Decision. (77:13)
And what would cause you to recognize
what the Day of Decision is? (77:14)
Woe on that Day to the ones who deny! (77:15)
Caused We not the ancient ones to perish? (77:16)
Again, We will pursue the later ones. (77:17)
Thus, We accomplish this with the ones who sin. (77:18)
Woe on that Day to the ones who deny! (77:19)
Create We you not of despicable water? (77:20)
Then, We made it in a secure stopping place (77:21)
for a known measuring? (77:22)
And We measured.
How bountiful are the ones who measure! (77:23)
Woe on that day to the ones who deny! (77:24)
Make We not the earth a place of drawing together (77:25)
the living and the lifeless? (77:26)
We made on it soaring, firm mountains.
We satiated you with water of the sweetest kind. (77:27)
Woe on that Day to the ones who deny! (77:28)
Set out toward what you had been in it denying. (77:29)
Set out to the shade. It is possessor of three columns, (77:30)
having no shade nor availing you against the flaming! (77:31)
Truly, it will throw up sparks of fire like the palace, (77:32)
as though it was a string of saffron-colored male camels. (77:33)
Woe on that Day to the ones who deny! (77:34)
This Day they will not speak for themselves (77:35)
nor will they be given permission
so that they make excuses. (77:36)
Woe on that Day to the ones who deny! (77:37)
This is the Day of Decision;
We gathered you and the ancient ones. (77:38)
So if you had been cunning,
then, try to outwit Me. (77:39)
Woe on that Day to the ones who deny! (77:40)[8]

COMMENTARY°

RHYTHM OF THE SIGNS

This chapter bears sharp features, powerful images and strong notes. Indeed, it sounds like a spitting fire. It puts hearts to trial, presenting questions and threats that pierce like sharp arrows. We see a host of images from both this life and the life to come, the universe and the human soul, as well as scenes of the suffering that the ungrateful will endure. After each main scene, the chapter levels a fire-like strike at those hearts who deny the truth, saying: Woe on that day for those who deny the truth. This comment is repeated ten times in this chapter alone, as it is the final note deployed in each of its sections. It is an especially apt comment, given its sharp features and strong beat.

The chapter is composed of sections with short, quick signs. It changes its rhyme with each section, although some rhyming sounds are picked up again after they have been changed. All these sections, rhymes and short signs are sharply felt, one after the other. One hardly recovers after one sharp note when a new one begins. Right from the outset, the general atmosphere is tempestuous, starting with a scene of strong winds, or angels: (77:1-77:6) This opening is perfectly consistent with the ambience of the chapter.

Each of the sections that follow the opening of the chapter represents a special round or a journey into a different world. This gives the chapter great scope for reflection, feeling, ideas and responses. This scope is also much wider than the words and sentences imply.

The first round paints scenes from the day of distinction, showing the great upheaval that will take place in the universe. This is the appointment defined by God's messengers to humanity: (77:8-77:15)

The second round refers to the fates suffered by communities of olden times, highlighting the divine law that applies to those who deny the divine message: (77:16-77:19)

Round three takes us to the origins of the human being and the impression they give of God's overall planning: (77:20-77:24)

In the fourth round we see how the earth, which takes its children, living or dead, to its bosom, has been equipped with the facility of stable life and with water that is necessary for life: (77:25-77:28)

The fifth round speaks of those who reject the divine message and how they are received with strong rebuke, as well as their impending punishment, on the day of distinction: (77:29-77:34)

The next two rounds continue with the ungrateful, adding further rebuke: (77:35-77:40)

The question here: *By ones who are sent successively,* (77:1-7)

is that of the resurrection which the ungrateful found very hard to accept, yet the Quran confirms it time after time, in many chapters and in various ways. It was especially necessary that the Quran take such care in establishing the truth of resurrection, this so that the faith can be properly established in people's minds and hearts and further that their standards and values could then be redefined. Belief in the Day of Judgment is the corner-stone of both the divine faith and human life. It is the pivot around which everything in life turns, and the criterion that judges all values and standards. Therefore, establishing the truth of resurrection and subsequent reckoning and judgment needed such a sustained effort.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 77:1-77:40

WHO IS GOD?

It is God who sends forth the angels and the winds.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quranic message asks Prophet Muhammad: What will cause you, Muhammad, to recognize what the Day of Decision is?

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The signs repeat seven times in this section of Chapter 75: Woe to the ones who deny the Day of Decision.

FOR STUDENTS

Raise basic and important questions about what you are learning, discover and discuss underlying principles in your thoughts. Explain how what you have learned has changed your thinking in some way. Explore an idea in depth, and either come to conclusions, or clarify issues and concepts. Ask yourself: What do I believe? How do I see things? What reasons seem most persuasive to me? What things are most important in life? What is the difference between important and trivial? What are people like? What kinds of people are there? What is the difference between right and wrong? What is friendship? During such discussions, raise points made during study, and relate your general ideas to specifics you have studied.

QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS•

What thing is most important in these signs?
What is the difference between important and trivial?
What are his people like?
What kinds of people are there?
What is the difference between right and wrong?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I understood when the Quran explained what the Day of Decision is.

The Quran used oaths sworn to various aspect of nature that God created to state just as the oaths are true, so we will receive that which God has promised us.

These signs to which God gives oaths are similar to what the astronomers have found in the universe as well as that which naturalists study.

LESSON 33(2). CRITICAL THINKING MORAL TRAIT LOVE, EMPATHETIC ALTRUISM* (MERCY, COMPASSION)

There is yet a higher stage of moral achievement described as selfless concern for the welfare of others or altruism (*ihsan*) which signifies performance of moral action in conformity with the moral ideal with the added sense of deep loyalty to the cause of God, done in the most graceful way that is motivated by a unique love for God. Signs (77:41-77:50) first speak to those who do good, that is, those who try to achieve a selfless concern for the welfare of others (*ihsan*). Performance of God-conscious actions accompanied by true faith is only a stage in the moral life of a person which, after several stages, gradually matures into altruism (*ihsan*).

Altruism is based on having a deep love for God. It is those who will be given recompense as the doers of good (77:44). Love as a human ideal demands that the human being should love God as the complete embodiment of all moral values above everything else.

Emphatic altruism is understanding the need to imaginatively put oneself in the place of others to genuinely understand them. Recognize your egocentric tendency to identify truth with your immediate perceptions or longstanding beliefs. Empathic altruism correlates with the ability to accurately reconstruct the viewpoints and reasoning of others and to reason from premises, assumptions, and ideas other than your own. This trait also requires that you remember occasions when you were wrong, despite an intense conviction that you were right, and consider that you might be similarly deceived in a case at hand.

Its disvalue is exemplified by those who *sin, deny* and show hatred, harshness and unkindness to them. The Quran asks: *What is the hadith (discourse) that they will believe after this discourse* (*hadith*)?

QURANIC CHAPTER 77: THE ONES WHO ARE SENT (AL-MURASALAT)
SIGNS 77:41-77:50

Makkah: *Truly, the ones who are Godfearing*
will be amidst shade and springs (77:41)
and sweet fruit for which they lust:(77:42)
Eat and drink wholesomely for what you had been doing.(77:43)
Truly, We, thus, give recompense
to the ones who are doers of good.(77:44)
Woe on that Day to the ones who deny! (77:45)
Eat, take joy for a little. You are ones who sin.(77:46)
Woe on that Day to the ones who deny!(77:47)
Madinah (77:48)

Woe on that Day to the ones who deny! (77:49)
Then, in which discourse after this will they believe? (77:50)

COMMENTARY°

THE OTHER GROUP

Round eight speaks of the Godfearing and the blessings prepared for them: (77:41-77:45)

The last two rounds provide quick glimpses of the people who are bent on denying Gods message. The first reproaches them and the second shows them in obstinate rejection: (77:46-77:47; 77:49)

These rounds, their images and sharp notes conclude with a single sign asking: (77:50)

LESSON 33(2). SUMMARY OF SIGNS 77:41-77:50

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The signs here (77:41-77:50) in section 2 of Chapter 75 tell of the fate of those who are Godfearing. They will be in the Garden, Paradise, with all they want to eat and drink.

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN

Choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE STUDENTS•

Did God prescribe mercy for Himself?
Can you describe a time when you found God's mercy?
How is the Quran a mercy to those who believe?
Who can best phrase this question?
Is there another way to put this question?
What is the advantage of putting the question this way?
How would you put the question?
We can ask questions about questions.

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN

Choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I recognized that by defining something, I was giving it meaning.
I realized that once I defined something, the meaning then determined how I feel about it, how I act upon it and the implications it had.
I realized that there is often more than one way to define or give meaning to something.
I was able to turn the negatives into positives.
I was able to turn my mistakes into opportunities to learn.
I was able to make a list of five recurrent negative contexts in which I feel frustrated, angry, unhappy or worried.
I identified the definition/meaning in each case that was causing my negative emotions.
I was able to find a positive definition for each and then plan for my new responses as well as new emotions.

LESSON 34(1). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL STANDARD

WORTHINESS• (FOCUSING ON THE IMPORTANT, NOT TRIVIAL, TO BE SIGNIFICANT)

Worthiness indicates significance. Here (50:1-50:15) the signs indicate how worthy God alone is to be worshipped.

The Messenger recites this chapter when he delivers a sermon on (the day of the Festivals (*id*) and before Friday formal prayer, making it the theme and the content of his speech for large audiences. A commentator° says:

> They (the ungrateful) think it strange that someone from among themselves should warn them when this is, indeed, the very thing that human nature easily accepts. It is most natural that God should have chosen one of them to deliver His message for he was someone who could readily share their feelings, speak their language, take part in their activities, be amongst them through their lives, appreciate their motives as also recognize their abilities and limits. Such a person is the best one to warn them against what may happen should they persist in their erring ways, to teach them how to change course, and to outline the duties that they have to fulfil. He would be the first to discharge these duties.
>
> They felt it strange, however, to have such a message delivered in the first place, and were particularly amazed that this Messenger should speak to them about their being raised from the dead.
>
> Those people in Makkah, however, did not look at the question in this light at all. They were too naive to understand the true nature of life and death, or to visualize God's power.
>
> Thus, to them, it was a question of improbability of life after death when people's bodies have decomposed and turned to dust. Yet, since life takes place in the first place, why is it improbable for it to occur again. Moreover, this miracle of life occurs before their very eyes at every moment. It is there around them throughout the universe. It is to this that the Quran draws their attention in this chapter.

QURANIC CHAPTER 50: QAF (QAF)

SIGNS 50:1-50:11

Makkah: *Qaf. By the glorious Quran!* (50:1)
Nay! They marveled that there drew near them
one who warns from among themselves.
So the ones who are ungrateful said:
This is a strange thing. (50:2)

When we died and had been earth dust,
that is a far-fetched returning! (50:3)
Surely, We knew what the earth reduces from them.
And with Us is a guardian Book. (50:4)
Nay! They denied The Truth when it drew near them,
so they are in a confused state of affairs. (50:5)
Look they not on the heaven above them,
how We built it and made it appear pleasing?
And there are not any gaps in it. (50:6)
And the earth, We stretched it out and cast on it firm mountains
and caused in it to develop every lovely, diverse pair (50:7)
for contemplation and as a reminder to every servant,
one who turns in repentance. (50:8)
And We sent down blessed water from heaven.
Then, We caused gardens to develop from it
and reaped grains of wheat (50:9)
and high-reaching date palm trees with ranged spathes (50:10)
as provision for My servants.
And We gave life by them to a lifeless land.
Thus, will be the going forth. (50:11)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah(50:12)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the
People of Aad; Book 26: Lot (50:13)
Makkah: Book 27: Shuayb (Jethro) and the People of Midian,
Companions of the Woods (50:14)
Makkah: *Were We wearied by the first creation?*
Nay! They are perplexed about a new creation. (50:15)

COMMENTARY°

RHYTHM OF THE SIGNS

It is certainly a momentous chapter, outlining fundamental facts, using a strong rhythm, powerful expressions, clearly-delineated images, highlighted connotations and emphatic sign endings. It addresses our hearts and minds from all angles putting before us the truth that we are always under God's watchful eye, from birth to death, and then to the time of resurrection, gathering and reckoning. This is an ever-present watch of human beings at all times, losing nothing and overlooking nothing. Every breath, fleeting thought and feeling is known. Every uttered word is recorded. Every move is monitored. This complete watch accounts for thoughts and actions alike. Nothing escapes it. Nothing is hidden from it. It monitors secret whispers in the same way as it records what is done in broad daylight.

All these are well-known facts. However, the chapter outlines them here in a way that shows them to be totally new, with surprising effects that combine apprehension with wonder. It shakes us powerfully alerting us to a momentous event, about which we have thus far been oblivious. It uses images of life, death, decay and subsequent resurrection.

Lesson 34(1). Summary of Signs 50:1-50:15

Who is God?

God protects the guardian book, created the heavens, the earth, firm mountains and blessed water from heaven. He caused gardens to develop from it and reaped grains of wheat, high-reaching date palm trees and ranged spathes as provision for His servants. Creation was not a one-time event by God, but there are continuous new creations.

How are the signs directed towards Prophet Muhammad?

The ungrateful marvel that one from among them is one who warns.

How are the signs directed towards the Community?

The signs are directed towards the ungrateful who deny the resurrection even after all that God has created. They denied the truth when it drew near them and ended up in a confused state of affairs.

Students Summarize a Sign

Choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

Questions to Ask the Students•

Why were the believers rewarded with victory?
What is the central idea in these signs?
Which of the facts in these signs are most important?

Student Assessment

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I am frequently able to explain this to someone.
I understood a new concept, that there are continuous new creations.
I know that if I cannot explain these signs to someone else, it shows that I have not learned them well enough.

LESSON 34(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

Quranic knowledge can be divided into multiple categories as this knowledge served as the basis for the development of Islamic sciences over the centuries. There are concepts that are basic to the study of Anthropology, History, Political Science, Mathematics, Logic and so forth. Those who understand the interdisciplinary connections of the Quranic sacred text, take relevant concepts, knowledge and insight from the Quranic signs so that they are continuously finding connections between various categories of knowledge whether it be the basic principles of the arts or science. Quranic thinkers: Do not allow the somewhat arbitrary distinctions between academic subjects to control their thinking. When considering issues which transcend subjects, they bring relevant concepts, knowledge, and insights from many subjects to the analysis. They make use of insights into one subject to inform their understanding of other subjects. There are always connections between subjects: language and logic; history, geography, psychology, anthropology, physiology; politics, geography, science, ecology; math, science, economics.

Sign 50:25 that follows speaks of those who are stubborn in their ingratitude. This would include those who show ingratitude for the goodness of increasing their knowledge. Recall the sign: *O Lord, increase me in knowledge.* (20:114).

50:26 refers to three examples of the stubborn ingrates: (50:25) who delays good, exceeds the limits, is immersed in grave doubt. *Khayr* here means that he did not only withhold himself from the path of goodness but forbade other also to follow it. He had become a hindrance for the people in the way o goodness and exerted his utmost to see that goodness did not spread.

That is, he transgressed the bounds of morality in everything he did. He was ever ready to do anything and everything for the sake of his interests, his desires and his lusts. He amassed wealth by unlawful means and spent it in unlawful ways. He usurped the people's rights, had neither control over his tongue nor over his hands, and committed every injustice and excess. He did not rest content with creating hindrances in the way of goodness but harassed those who adopted goodness and persecuted those who worked for it.

The word *murib* as used in the original has two meanings: a doubter and the one who puts others in doubt, and both are implied here. It means that he was not only himself involved in doubt but also created doubts in the hearts of others. He held as doubtful God and the Hereafter and the angels and the Prophethood and revelation and every other truth of religion. Anything that was presented by the Prophets as a truth was held as unbelievable by him, and the same disease he spread to other people. Whomsoever he came in contact with, he would create one or the other doubt, one or the other evil thought in his mind.

EXAMPLES OF INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

Science: In doing research in the sciences, Quranic thinkers record from

in depth observation, collecting as much information as possible and then critiquing their analysis of the gathered information so that they can draw the best possible inference through the use of inductive reasoning. *He Who taught by the pen. He taught the human being what he knows not.* (96:4-96:5)

Politics: Quranic thinkers try to obtain their own inferences after listening to .... *what is said and follow the fairer of it. Those are those whom God guided. Those, they are imbued with intuition.* (39:17-39:18) After listening to all opinions, they try to arrive at the best of the varying opinions as *you differ in what you say.* (51:8)

Education: Education in schools after listening to .... *what is said and follow the fairer of it* calls on us to learn all types of concepts, faiths and ideas and then choose our own.

QURANIC CHAPTER 50: QAF (QAF)
SIGNS 50:16-50:29

Makkah: *And, certainly,*
We created the human being.
We know what evil his soul whispers to him.
We are nearer to him than the jugular vein. (50:16)
When the two receivers are ones who receive,
seated on the right and on the left, (50:17)
he utters not a saying but that there is one ready,
watching over near him (50:18)
when the agony of death drew near with The Truth.
*That is what **you** had been shunning.* (50:19)
And the trumpet will be blown.
That is the Day of The Threat. (50:20)
And every person will draw near with an angel,
one who drives, and an angel witness. (50:21)
*Certainly, **you** had been heedless of this so*
*We removed **your** screen from **you***
*so that **your** sight this Day will be sharp.* (50:22)
And his comrade angel would say:
This is what is ready near me of his record: (50:23)
Cast into hell every stubborn ingrate (50:24)
who delays the good, one who exceeds the limits,
one who is in grave doubt, (50:25)
he who made another god with God!
Then, cast him into the severe punishment! (50:26)
His comrade Satan would say:
Our Lord! I made him not overbold,

but he had been going far astray. (50:27)
He would say: Strive not against one another
in My presence, for, surely,
I will put forward The Threat to you. (50:28)
The statement is not substituted in My presence
and I am not unjust to the servants. (50:29)[9]

COMMENTARY[o]

EVERY LITTLE SECRET

The human being is made by God's hand, and God knows every little detail about him. (50:16) Thus the human being realizes that his inner thoughts are laid open. Nothing is hidden. Even the whispers of his soul, secret as these may be, are known to God, in preparation for the Day of Reckoning, which people often deny. (50:16)

The chapter makes the control even stricter, showing the human being throughout his life as being under the ever-present watch of two angels, on his right and left, who record every move he makes, every word he says and every thought he entertains: (50:17-50:18)

It is noteworthy that truth itself is mentioned here: (50:19) This suggests that a human being sees the whole truth as he is about to die. (50:20)

It is the soul, every single one, that is held to account, and it is the one who receives the outcome. (50:21) It comes with two assigned to it: one driving it on and the other to bear witness.

In this extremely difficult situation, the person is told: (50:22) There is nothing to blur your eyesight now. (50:23)

The chapter says nothing about examining the record. Instead, it states the divine verdict as it is given to the two angels: the one leading the person and the witness. (50:24-50:26)

This scares his companion who, thinking that his long association with the condemned person may reflect on him, hastens to dissociate himself from his doings: (50:27)

A final order is now issued to stop all argument: (50:28-50:29) The occasion is not one for contention. Warnings were issued earlier, stating the nature of requital for every action. No one is unjustly dealt with, for the one who looks into peoples cases and determines their fate is the faultless arbiter.

Such was the method adopted by people who benefited by the Quran and by the Prophets directives concerning the facts it speaks of. They took to heart what it said and acted on its basis.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 50:16-59:29

WHO IS GOD?

God is closer to us than our jugular vein. God knows what evil our soul whispers to us. God is not unjust.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

He had previously been unaware of the Day of The Threat so God removed his screen from him so that his sight this Day will be sharp.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

God knows of what evil their soul whispers to them. Those who are stubborn and ungrateful will be cast into hell along with those who delay or prevent the good, those who are aggressors (ones who exceed the limits), those who are in grave doubt and make another god with God. They will receive a severe punishment. Satan will try to deny that he had anything to do with their deeds, but God will not accept any striving in His presence and He is not unjust to his servants.

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN

Choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS•

Are the above signs evocative? To the point?

How does it illustrate or enhance the point made?

Evaluate the psychological, sociological, or historical accuracy of the sign.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to understand the examples of interdisciplinary connections based on the Quranic signs.

I now know which sign in the Quran says that God is nearer to us than our jugular vein.

LESSON 34(3). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE

Who are the wise? (50:32-50:35) Known values of Quranic thinking include self-development (*jihad al-akbar*) and social improvement (*ummah* as a middle community). Both of these require the recognition of gaps between ideals and practice as the gap causes a loss of truth and consistency. This strategy of recognizing the gaps between facts and ideals is connected with developing integrity and good faith.

Suggest a classroom discussion on the importance of attaining consistency of thought and action which can result in wisdom (*hikmah*). What is wisdom?

Wisdom[10] as a human ideal stands for the human being's search for knowledge or truth. It is something which is distinguished from conjecture or imperfect knowledge: *There is no knowledge with them about it but they are pursuing an opinion.* (4:157)

Different stories are related in the Quran, several similitudes and signs pointing to reality are detailed and explained, so that people may reflect and ponder over things. It is the characteristic of the God-conscious that they not only celebrate the praises of God, standing, sitting, and lying down on their sides, but also contemplate and ponder over the different phenomena of nature. *Truly, in the creation of the heavens and of the earth and the alteration of nighttime and daytime there are signs for those imbued with intuition, those who remember God while upright and sitting and on their sides and they reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: Our Lord! You had not created this in vain. Glory be to You! Then, protect us from the punishment of the fire.* (3:190-3:191) The people are, therefore, advised repeatedly to look at and observe the phenomena of nature, pondering over everything in creation to arrive at the truth.

None can grasp the message of revelation except people of understanding and those firmly grounded in knowledge. *And none recollects, but those imbued with intuition.* (3:7) Lack of true knowledge leads people to revile the true God: *And offend not those who call to other than God so that they not offend God out of spite without knowledge.* (6:108) invent lies against Him, and worship other gods besides Him. The only safety lies in following the revelation which is replete with the knowledge of God: *Know that it was only caused to descend by the knowledge of God.* (11:14)

Whosoever has been given knowledge has indeed been given abundant good: *And whomever is given wisdom, then, surely, was given much good and none recollects no doubt but those imbued with intuition.* (2:269) Those who dispute wrongly about God are the ones who are without knowledge, without guidance, and without a book of enlightenment. Only those people will be promoted to suitable ranks and degrees who have faith and are possessed of

knowledge, and only those who have knowledge really fear God and tread the path of God-consciousness.

The Quran advises the Prophet to pray for advance in knowledge. *And say: My Lord! Increase me in knowledge!* (20:114) The mysterious teacher of Moses who tried to help him have a glimpse of the working of the unseen had knowledge proceeding from God, i.e., *ilm al-ladunni. Then, they found a servant among Our servants to whom We gave mercy from Us and We taught him knowledge which proceeds from Our Presence* (ilm al-ladunni). (18:65) Saul (Jalut) was appointed king of the Jacobites because he was gifted by God abundantly with knowledge and bodily prowess. Noah, David, and Solomon possessed knowledge and judgment. Jacob had a lot of knowledge and experience; Joseph possessed abundant power and knowledge, and so also was Moses given wisdom and knowledge. It was through knowledge and reflection on the phenomena of nature, the heaven and the earth, that Abraham was able to arrive at the ultimate truth. It was through his personal experience and knowledge—his ideals being consistent with his actions—that Joseph refused to follow the path of the unbelievers and adopted the path of Abraham.

Signs 50:30-50:45 to follow contrast and compare the ideal addressed in the Quranic signs with actual practice in order to attain that ideal—a heart that turns in repentance. The Quran is a reminder of this to whomever has a heart, who has the ability "to hear" and actually listens—this person becomes a witness to the Quranic ideals through their practices.

QURANIC CHAPTER 50: QAF (QAF)
SIGNS 50:30-50:45

On a Day when We will say to hell:
Are you full?
And it will say: Are there any additions? (50:30)
And the Garden was brought close
to the ones who are Godfearing, not far off. (50:31)
This is what is promised you,
for every penitent and guardian (50:32)
who dreaded The Merciful in the unseen
and drew near with a heart
of one who turns in repentance: (50:33)
Enter you there in peace. That is the Day of Eternity! (50:34)
They will have what they will in it
and with Us there is yet an addition. (50:35)
And how many We caused to perish before them of generations
who were stronger than they in courage
so that they searched about on the land.

Was there any asylum? (50:36)
Truly, in that is a reminder for him,
for whoever had a heart or,
having the ability to hear, gave listen.
He is a witness. (50:37)
Madinah (50:38)
*So have **you** patience with whatever they say*
*and glorify with the praise of **your** Lord*
before the coming up of the sun and before sunset. (50:39)
And in the night glorify Him
and at the end part of the prostrations. (50:40)
*And listen **you** on a Day when one who calls out*
will cry out from a near place. (50:41)
On a Day when they will hear the Cry with The Truth.
That will be the Day of going forth. (50:42)
Truly, it is We who give life and cause to die
and to Us is the Homecoming (50:43)
on a Day when the earth will be split open swiftly.
That will be an easy assembling for Us. (50:44)
We are greater in knowledge as to what they say.
*And **you** are not haughty over them so remind by the Quran*
whoever fears My threat. (50:45)

COMMENTARY°

Thus the fearsome scene of reckoning, with all its hardship, is thus ended, but the overall scene continues, with the chapter revealing a more fearful aspect of it: Thus, the fearsome scene of reckoning, with all its hardship, is thus ended, but the overall scene continues, with the chapter revealing a more fearful aspect of it: (50:30) The whole scene is one of dialogue. Therefore, hell is portrayed here in the same way, with a question put to it and an answer given. This reveals something that is both amazing and awesome. We see every hardened ungrateful, everyone who hindered good, who was a sinful aggressor, a fomenter of doubt being thrown into hell where they pile up in great numbers. Then hell is asked whether it has had its full. Its reply is that of an unsatiated glutton: *Are you full?* How frightening!

A contrasting image is drawn on the other side: It is pleasant, calm and friendly. Heaven is shown drawing near to the God-conscious such that they can see it for themselves. An honorable welcome awaits them: (50:31-50:35) The final part of the chapter sounds like the final beat of a tune, as it repeats its strongest notes to an even faster time. It includes a glimpse of history and the fate of the earlier ungrateful, an image from the open book of the universe and a new

scene from the Day of Judgment, all coupled with a serious and inspiring directive: (50:36-50:45)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 50:31-50:45

WHO IS GOD?

One day God will address hell and ask: Are you full? It is God who gives life and causes to die and to God is the Homecoming on a Day when the earth will be split open swiftly. God caused to perish many generations before who were stronger in courage than whoever denies the Quranic message.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quranic message confirms that Prophet Muhammad is not haughty over the people. It addresses him saying: So have you, Muhammad, patience with whatever the ungrateful say to him and glorify with the praise of **your** Lord before the coming up of the sun and before sunset. And in the night glorify Him and at the end part of the prostrations. And listen **you**, Muhammad, on a Day when one who calls out will cry out form a near place. Prophet Muhammad should remind by the Quran whoever fears God's threat.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The Godfearing will have the Garden (Paradise) brought close to them. This will be for every penitent and guardian who dreaded The Merciful in the unseen and drew near with a heart of one who turns in repentance. These are the people who are invited to enter in peace on the Day of Eternity.

The Quran is a reminder for whoever has a heart and having the ability to hear, gives listen. He is a witness.

QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS•

What ideas or principles does the Quranic message clarify?
What idea am I using in my thinking?
Is this idea causing problems for me or for others?
What is the main hypothesis you are using in your reasoning?
Are you using this term in keeping with established usage?
What main distinctions should we draw in reasoning through this?
What idea is the sacred text using in its thinking?
Is there a problem with it?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I understand the importance of self-development and working on myself.
I love observing nature showing the signs of God.

LESSON 35. CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING:
USING CRITICAL VOCABULARY

The Quran encourages thinking about thinking (90:5, 90:7, 90:10, 90:12). God commands us to reflect about something carefully so one may not jump to conclusions without critical insight. *Say: Journey through the earth; then, look on how He began the creation. Again, God will cause the last growth to grow. Truly, God is Powerful over everything.* (29:20)

God directs the attention of people to think by saying: Say to them. An example of the hundreds of 'Say" signs: *Say: I admonish you in but one thing: That you stand up for God by twos and one by one. Again, reflect. There is not in your companion any madness. He is only a warner to you of a severe punishment in advance of you.* (34:46)

God tells us that the objective of so many stories which have been mentioned in various chapters is to motivate humanity to think and reflect in order to seek wisdom. (7:176)

In the field of *tawhid* and to direct human being's attention to the creator: *Truly, in the creation of the heavens and of the earth and the alteration of nighttime and daytime there are signs for those imbued with intuition, those who remember God while upright and sitting and on their sides and they reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: Our Lord! **You** had not created this in vain. Glory be to **You**! Then, protect us from the punishment of the fire.* (3:191-3:192)

To reflect upon the signs in the Quran: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to **you**, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* (38:29)

Barriers or Obstacles to Quranic Thinking

Arrogance (*takabbur*): *The Messiah will never disdain that he be a servant of God nor the angels, the ones who are brought near to Him. Whoever disdains His worship and grows arrogant, He will assemble them altogether to Himself.* (2:34)

Traditionalism and Blind Following (*taashub* and *taqlid*): *When it was said to them: Follow what God caused to descend. They said: Nay! We will follow whatever we discovered our fathers were following on it—even though their fathers had been not at all reasonable—nor are they truly guided.* (2:170)

Giving the Lie to the Messages (*takzib*): *Devised he a lie against God or is there a madness in him? Nay! Those who believe not in the world to come there is a punishment and a going far astray.* (34:8)

Hypocrisy (*nifaq*): *They, those who say: Spend not on such ones who are with the Messenger of God until they break away. To God belongs the treasures of the heavens and the earth but the ones who are hypocrites understand not.* (63:7)

Ignorance and Not Being Aware of the Truth (*jahlu*): *Even if We sent down the angels to them and the dead spoke to them and we assembled everything against them, face to face, yet they would not believe unless God wills, except many of them are ignorant.* (6:111)

Lust and Desires (*hawa*): *Surely, He explained distinctly to you what He forbade to you unless you were driven by necessity to it. Truly, many cause others to go astray by their desires without knowledge. Truly, your Lord, He is greater in knowledge of the ones who exceed the limits.* (6:119)

Reliance on Conjecture, Opinion: *If you have obeyed most of who are on the earth, they will cause you to go astray from the way of God. They follow nothing but opinion and they only guess.* (6:116)

Turning Away from the Truth (*fasiqun*, ones who disobey): (9:73-9:74)[11]

Quranic references to concentrated and goal-oriented thinking provoked by the challenge to find something new or to solve a difficult problem (*tadabbur*) and the exercise of intellect occur in conjunction with basically five major themes:

Belief in the Oneness of God (*tawhid*)
Reflection on the Quran
The Human Being and the Universe
Historical Precedent
Thinking Itself

The Quran gives narratives of the past so that the people may think and reflect over them.

When participating in discussions, explain the role of your remarks in the discussion:

Supporting a point
Raising an objection
Answering an objection
Distinguishing concepts or issues
Questioning relevance, etc:
    Why were you raising that point here?
    Are you supporting your classmates's point or ... ?

The Quran teaches an essential doctrine of God's signs in the universe functioning as pointers to the providential purpose at all levels of creation. The Quran repeatedly provokes its reciters to think about the signs of God in the universe and within themselves, to understand God's illustrious presence in them, and ultimately to vindicate the truth.

QURANIC CHAPTER 90: THE LAND (AL-BALAD) SIGNS 90:1-90:20

Makkah: *I swear an oath by this land* (90:1)
you are a lodger in this land (90:2)
and by ones who are your parents and what is procreated, (90:3)
truly, We created the human being in trouble. (90:4)
Assumes he that none has power over him? (90:5)
He says: I have caused abundant wealth to perish. (90:6)
Assumes he that none sees him? (90:7)
Make we not two eyes for him (90:8)
and a tongue and two lips (90:9)
and guided him to the two open highways? (90:10)
Yet he rushed not onto the steep ascent. (90:11)
What will cause you to recognize
what the steep ascent is? (90:12)
It is the liberating of a bondsperson (90:13)
or feeding on a day possessing famine (90:14)
an orphan, possessor of kinship, (90:15)
or a needy, possessor of misery. (90:16)
Again, it had been among those who believed
and counseled one another to having patience
and counseled one another to clemency. (90:17)
Those will be the Companions of the Right. (90:18)
But they who were ungrateful for Our signs
they will be the Companions of the Left (90:19)
and over them will be fire, that which is closing in. (90:20)

COMMENTARY°

This short chapter touches on a great many facts which are of central importance to human life. Its style is characterized by powerful allusions. Numerous facts of this nature are not easily combined in any form of concise writing except that of the Quran, with its unique ability to hit the right chords with such swift and penetrating strokes.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 90:1-90:20

WHO IS GOD?

God swears an oath by the land. God created the human being in trouble. God created two eyes, a tongue and two lips for human beings. He guided them to the open highways, yet none rushed onto the steep ascent.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quranic message tells him: you, Muhammad, are a lodger in this

land. It asks him: What will cause you, Muhammad, to recognize what the steep ascent is?

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The Quranic message asks: Do human beings who have been created in trouble assume that none has power over them? Do they assume that none sees them? They do not rush onto the steep ascent. What is the steep ascent? It is the liberating of a bondsperson or feeding the hungry on a day of famine, an orphan, possessor of kinship, or a needy, possessor misery. Those who do will be the Companions of the Right who believe and counsel one another to patience and counsel one another to clemency. However, those who are ungrateful will be among the Companions of the Left and over them will be the fire which is closing in on them.

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN

Choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

The following questions may help the in utilizing concepts, theories, definitions, axioms, laws, principles, models and/or vocabulary.

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE STUDENTS•

What facts are relevant to this issue?
What facts must we consider in deciding this issue?
What information do we need?
Do you mean that your classmate is assuming that ...?
The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are ... ?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I know that I cannot interpret information without ideas or concepts, or some way to give meaning.
I am able to find the key idea, the central concept of the signs.
I know the subject of the concept and its vocabulary.
I know that I think within a vocabulary.
I use these vocabulary terms because they are powerful tools for thinking.

LESSON 36. CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PRESUPPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED (OPINION)

What is an assumption? An assumptions is a conjecture, a guess, an opinion, a premise, a hypothesis of a thing that is accepted as true or as certain to happen, without proof. All human thought and action or experiences are based on assumptions. The thought process needs them in order to be able to move forward. The key is for you to be aware of them.

When we study Quranic concepts, there is something that they find in the signs that refer to assumptions people make. For example: *Assumes he that none has power over him?* (90:5-90:17)

Much of what is wrong with human thought can be found in the uncritical or unexamined assumptions that underlie it. For example, we often experience the world in such a way as to assume that we are observing things just as we are, as though we were seeing the world without the filter of a point of view. People we disagree with, of course, we recognize as having a point of view. *Say: Shall We tell you who will be ones who are losers by their actions? It is those whose endeavoring went astray in this present life while they assume that they are doing good by their handiwork.* (18:103-18:104)

One of the key dispositions of critical thinking is the on-going sense that as human being, we always think within a perspective, that we virtually never experience things totally and absolutely. There is a connection, therefore, between thinking so as to be aware of our assumptions and being intellectually humble. *Assumed humanity that they will be left because they say: We believed and they will not be tried?* (29:2)

All reasoning must begin somewhere, must take some things for granted. Any 'defect' in the assumptions or presuppositions with which the reasoning begins is a possible source of problems. Assessing skills of reasoning involves assessing the ability to recognize and articulate their assumptions, again according to the relevant standards. *Assumed those who sought to do evil deeds that We will make them equal with those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality? Are their living and dying equal? How evil is the judgment they give!* (45:21)

A Quranic thinker's assumptions may be stated clearly or unclearly; the assumptions may be justifiable or unjustifiable, crucial or extraneous, consistent or contradictory. The feedback we receive from others on our ability to meet the relevant standards will be a large factor in the improvement of the Quranic reasoning. *Or assumed you that you would enter the Garden while God knows not those who struggled among you and knows the ones who remain steadfast?* (3:142)

Assumptions usually operate at the subconscious or unconscious level of thought. Assumptions should be justified by sound evidence. *Assumes the*

human being that We will never gather his bones? (75:3-75:10)

In understanding our own assumptions as we try to exercise Quranic thinking, we begin to realize that we can't figure out everything simultaneously. We have to make assumptions to figure something out. It is not possible to have many unanswered questions at the same time. The mind must make assumptions as it works to answer a question or solve a problem. It must take something for granted. We know that we can always question assumptions as we move forward in our thought process. At the same time, we should think about the assumptions that we are making. We should try to make them with some awareness by asking ourselves: Do they make sense?

We are in a better position to evaluate any reasoning or behavior when all of the elements of that reasoning or behavior are made explicit. We base both our reasoning and our behavior on beliefs we take for granted. We are often unaware of these assumptions. It is only by recognizing them that we can evaluate them.

Quranic thinkers have a passion for truth and for accepting the strongest reasoning. Thus, we have the intellectual courage to seek out and reject false assumptions of others. We realize that everyone makes some questionable assumptions. We are willing to question, and have others question, even our own most cherished assumptions. We consider alternative assumptions. We base their acceptance or rejection of assumptions on our rational scrutiny of them. We hold questionable assumptions with an appropriate degree of tentativeness. As developing independent thinkers, we evaluate assumptions for ourselves, and do not simply accept the assumptions of others, even those assumptions made by everyone we know. *Assume they that We hear not their secret thoughts and their conspiring secretly? Yea! Our messengers are near them writing down.* (43:80)

Those who refuse God's message are ones who follow assumptions, conjecture and opinion without examining or evaluating them. The assumption that is questioned here is the accusation made by those ungrateful for God's blessings, the same accusation made by Satan when he refused to bow down to Adam, namely, that it is the fault of God's Will that they ascribed partners with God (or, as in the case of Satan, it was God Who willed that Satan not bow down to Adam). The Quran asks the ungrateful: *Is there any knowledge with you that you bring out to Us*? (6:148)

God's revelation clearly states not to associate partners with God, but the ungrateful refuse to believe and prefer, instead to make excuses for their behavior rather than admit to their error. This sign teaches critical thinkers to question and distinguish between that which is conjecture and opinion and that which is the truth.

Analyze group influences on your life: Closely analyze the behavior that is encouraged, and discouraged, in the groups to which you belong. For any given group, what are they 'forbidden' to do? Every group enforces some level

of conformity. Most people live much too much within the view of themselves projected by others. Discover what pressure we are bowing to and think explicitly about whether or not to reject that pressure.

Next consider how we could integrate analyzing group influences on our life into our practice. One of the main things that groups do is control us by controlling the definitions we are allowed to operate with. When a group defines some things as 'cool' and some as 'dumb', the members of the group try to appear 'cool' and not appear 'dumb'. When the boss of a business says: 'That makes a lot of sense,' his subordinates know they are not to say: 'No, it is ridiculous.' They know this because defining someone as the 'boss' gives him/her special privileges to define situations and relationships.

Recall 86:15-86:16 below. *They are strategizing a strategy and I am strategizing a strategy.*

QURANIC CHAPTER 86: THE NIGHT VISITOR (AL-TARIQ) SIGNS 86:1-86:17

Makkah: *By the heaven and the night visitor,* (86:1)
*what will cause **you** to recognize*
what the night visitor is? (86:2)
It is the piercing star. (86:3)
Truly, every soul has one who guards it. (86:4)
So let the human being look on of what he was created. (86:5)
He was created of water, that which gushes forth, (86:6)
going forth from between the loins and the breast bone. (86:7)
Truly, He, in returning him,
certainly is One Who Has Power. (86:8)
On a Day all secret thoughts will be tried, (86:9)
then, there will not be for him any strength
nor one who helps. (86:10)
By the heaven possessing the returning (86:11)
and by the earth splitting with verdure, (86:12)
truly, the Quran is a decisive saying (86:13)
and it is not for mirth. (86:14)
Truly, they are strategizing a strategy. (86:15)
And I am strategizing a strategy. (86:16)
So respite the ones who are ungrateful!
*Grant **you** them a delay for awhile.* (86:17)[12]

COMMENTARY°

RHYTHM OF THE SIGNS

The signs here are like a persistent and strong knocking on a

door. The knocks and the shouts come one after the other: Wake up! Look around you! Think! Reflect! There is a God! There is planning, trial, liability, reckoning, reward, severe punishment and lasting bliss.

The present chapter has a sharp tone. The scenes portrayed, the rhythm chosen, the sounds of the individual words and their meanings—all contribute to this sharpness of tone. The scenes include the night visitor, the star piercing with brightness, the gushing water, the returning rain and the splitting earth. The meanings include watching over souls: For every soul there is a guardian who watches over it; the lack of strength and help: On the day when consciences are tried, the human being shall be helpless, with no supporter; the complete seriousness: This is surely a decisive word; it is no idle talk. The same characteristics apply to the warnings given in this chapter.

There is complete harmony between the scenes of the universe portrayed in the chapter and the facts it states. This harmony becomes abundantly clear when the chapter is carefully considered.

Summary of Signs 86:1-86:17

Who is God?

God swears an oath by the night visitor. God strategizes and the ungrateful are strategizing.

How are the signs directed towards Prophet Muhammad?

The Quranic messages asks Prophet Muhammad: What will cause you, Muhammad, to recognize what the night visitor is? Grant, **you**, Muhammad, the ungrateful a delay for awhile.

How are the signs directed towards the Community?

The night visitor is a piercing star. Every soul has one that guards it. Look, people, of what you were created—of water that gushes forth from between the loins and the breast bone. To Him who is One Who Has the Power, you will be returned. On that Day, all your secret thoughts will be tried, exhausting you and there will be no one who helps. Know that truly the Quran is a decisive saying and it was not for mirth or amusement.

Students Summarize a Sign

Choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

Questions to Ask Students•

Clearly identify the assumptions the Quranic signs express and determine whether they show a sense of justice.

Consider how these assumptions are shaping your point of view.
Assumptions are beliefs you take for granted.
If this was the evidence, and this the conclusion, what was assumed?
Or: If this is what he saw (heard, etc.), and this is what he concluded?
Or thought, what did he assume?
Why do people assume this?

The following questions may further help in making assumptions, presuppositions, taking for granted.

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE STUDENTS•

Some important assumptions I am using in my thinking are....?
What you are taking for granted.
What assumptions is the Quran using in its reasoning?
What assumptions am I using in my reasoning from the Quranic revelation?
What are you assuming?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I frequently evaluated my listening.
I actively listening for main points.
I was able to summarize what my instructor said in my own words.
I was able to elaborate what is meant by key terms.
I learned to frequently evaluate my reading.
I am trying to read the Quranic text actively.
I am asking questions as I read.
I am learning to distinguish what I understand from what I don't.

LESSON 37(1). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL STANDARD

BEING FAIR AND JUST* (RIGHT-MINDED)

JUSTICE

Justice is a divine attribute and the Quran emphasizes that we should adopt it as an intellectual standard. God commands people to be just towards one another: *Say: My Lord commanded me to justice* (7:29)*; truly, God commands justice and kindness and giving to one who is a possessor of kinship and He prohibits depravity and ones who are unlawful and insolent. He admonishes you so that perhaps you will recollect.* (16:90); *and I was commanded to be just among you.* (42:15) and, in judging between person and person, to judge justly: *And when you gave judgment between humanity, give judgment justly* (4:58) for He loves those who judge equitably.

All believers stand firmly for justice even if it goes against themselves, their parents, their relatives, without any distinction of rich and poor: *Be staunch in justice as witnesses to God even against yourselves or the ones who are your parents or the nearest of kin, whether you would be rich or poor.* (4:135) God's revelation itself is an embodiment of truth and justice: *Completed was the Word of your Lord in sincerity and justice.* (6:115) It is revealed with the Balance (of right and wrong) so that people may stand forth for justice: *We caused the Book to descend with them and the Balance so that humanity may uphold justice.* (57:25)

The intellectual standard of being fair and just is absolute and morally binding and the believers are, therefore, warned that they should not let the hatred of some people lead them to transgress the limits of justice or make them depart from the ideal of justice, for justice is very near to piety and righteousness: *Be staunch in justice as witnesses to God and let not that you detest a folk drive you into not dealing justly. Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness.* (5:8)

Justice demands that people should be true in word and deed: *They are the ones who remain steadfast and the ones who are sincere and the ones who are morally obligated and the ones who spend in the way of God and the ones who ask for forgiveness at the breaking of day* (3:17), who faithfully observe the contracts which they have made and fulfil all obligations.

Developing into a fair and just person requires the willingness and consciousness of the need to entertain all viewpoints sympathetically and to assess them with the same moral traits, without reference to one's own feelings or vested interests, or the feelings or vested interests of one's friends, community, or nation. It implies adherence to moral traits without reference to one's own advantage or the advantage of one's group.

The fair and just Quranic critical thinkers work to improve their thinking whenever they can. They want things for themselves, but they aren't selfish.

They want to help other people. They want to help make the world better for everyone. They are willing to give things up to help others (when it makes sense to). They don't always have the right answers, but they work to improve their thinking (and actions) over time.

This is to attain *far-reaching wisdom* and to remember that the Quran was made to be *easy as a Remembrance.* Will you be *one who recalls*?

QURANIC CHAPTER 54: THE MOON (AL-QAMAR)
SIGNS 54:1-54:22

Makkah: *The Hour neared*
and the moon was split. (54:1) [13]
And if they see a sign,
they turn aside and say: Incessant sorcery! (54:2)
And they denied and followed their own desires.
And every affair is that which is settled. (54:3)
And, certainly, the tidings drew near them
wherein was that which is to deter (54:4)
—namely, that which is far reaching wisdom—
yet warnings avail not. (54:5)
So turn you away from them on a Day
when One Who Calls will call to a horrible thing. (54:6)
Their sight will be that which is humbled
and they will go forth from the tombs
as if they had been dispersed locusts, (54:7)
ones who run forward with their eyes fixed in horror
towards The One Who Calls.
The ones who are ungrateful will say:
This is a difficult Day! (54:8)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (54:9)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (54:10)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (54:11)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (54:12)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (54:13)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (54:14)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (54:15)
So how had been My punishment and My warning? (54:16)
And, certainly, We made the Quran easy as a Remembrance.
Then, is there one who recalls? (54:17)
Makkah: Book 25: Aad (54:18)
Makkah: Book 25: Aad (54:19)
Makkah: Book 25: Aad (54:20)

Makkah: Book 25: Aad (54:21)

And, certainly, We made the Quran easy as a Remembrance. Then, is there one who recalls? (54:22)

COMMENTARY°

From start to finish, this chapter represents an awesome onslaught against those who deny the warnings, but gives at the same time confident reassurance to the believers. It is divided into a series of scenes, each showing a different type of suffering inflicted on a community of the ungrateful who denied God's messages. Each culminates with a violent shaking of the human heart, as it asks: (54:16) It then lets go, saying: (54:17)

Is there anyone who will receive admonition which occurs six times at the end of each reference to a past story of sin and rejection of warnings and in the appeal to the simplicity of the Quran: *So how had been My punishment and My warning?* There is an invitation to listen to the message and turn to truth and God-consciousness. The Hour of Judgment is nigh, but people forget or reject the Message. Is there any that will receive admonition?

Yet close as the dreaded Hour is, and despite the exciting and great event they have just witnessed and the numerous signs around them, the ungrateful continued to stubbornly reject the message, insisting on their erring ways. Not only did they ignore the warnings, they also did not properly reflect on the pointers to the great truth that should have brought them to faith.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 54:1-54:22

WHO IS GOD??

It is God who made the Quran easy as a Remembrance and the punishment and warning something to be recall.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quranic message says directly to Prophet Muhammad: So turn you, Muhammad, away from [the ungrateful] on a Day when One Who Calls will call to a horrible thing.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

Referring to the ungrateful, the Quranic message says that when they see a sign, they turn aside and call it incessant sorcery. They deny it and follow their own desires. Warnings avail them not. On that Day, their sight will be humbled and they will go forth from their tombs as if they were dispersed locusts, running forward, their eyes fixed in horror. They will say: This is a dif-

ficult Day, yet it did not have to be. God made the Quran easy as a Remembrance. Is there one who recalls? the Quranic message asks.

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN

Choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

STANDARDS FOR STUDENTS TO UNDERSTAND•

Be clear! Can you state what you mean? Can you give examples?
Be accurate! Are you sure it's true?
Be relevant! Is it related to what we are thinking about?
Be logical! Does it all fit together?
Be fair! Am I considering how my behavior might make others feel?
Be reasonable! Have we thought through this problem thoroughly and with an open mind?
Be relevant: Something is relevant when it relates directly to:
the problem you are trying to solve.
the question you are trying to answer.
whatever you are talking about or writing about.
Questions you can ask when you are not sure whether something is relevant:
How does what you say relate to the problem?
How does this information relate to the question we are asking?
What will help us solve the problem?
How does what you say relate to what we are talking about?
How does this relate to our purpose?
Be logical: Make Sure Everything Fits Together
Thinking is logical when everything fits together, when everything makes sense together.
Questions you can ask when you are not sure whether something is logical:
This doesn't make sense to me .
Can you show me how it all fits together?
The sentences in this paragraph don't seem to belong together.
How can I rewrite this paragraph so that the sentences all fit together?
What you are saying doesn't sound logical.
How did you come to your conclusions?
Explain why this makes sense to you.
The messages I am getting from this TV show don't seem sensible.
Should I follow along with these ideas, or should I reject them?

THINK ABOUT PURPOSE

Your purpose is what you are trying to achieve or make happen.

Questions you can ask to target purpose:

What is our purpose in doing what we are doing?
What is my purpose in doing what I am doing?
What is your purpose?
What is the purpose of this assignment?
What is the purpose of the main character in this story?
What is my teacher trying to accomplish?
What is my friend's purpose?
What is the purpose of this textbook?
Should we change our purpose?
Is my purpose fair to everyone?

INJUSTICE*

Opposed to the value of justice is the disvalue of injustice and violation of the principle of the mean such as those among the ungrateful who say on the Day of Resurrection: *This is a difficult Day*!

It is forbidden by the Quran to be influenced by people's vain desires and to deviate from the truth while judging between them. It is also forbidden to distort justice or decline to do justice: *Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God even against yourselves or the ones who are your parents or the nearest of kin, whether you would be rich or poor, then God is Closer to both than you are. So follow not your desires that you become unbalanced. And if you distort or turn aside, then, truly, God had been Aware of what you do.* (4:135) or to withhold justice from people merely because they are your enemies. It would be perfectly unjust to oneself and to others to pile up wealth, to bury gold and silver, and not to spend them in the cause of God and God-consciousness.

The Quran equally forbids as violation of the principle of justice the squandering of wealth like a spendthrift and recommends the middle way of prudence which is neither extravagance nor miserliness. It advises one neither to make one's hand tied to one's neck nor stretch it forth to its utmost reach so that one becomes blameworthy and destitute. One should eat and drink but not waste by excess for that would be violating the principle of justice. Excess in any form is forbidden whether in food or in religion: *O those who believed! Forbid not what is good that God permitted to you and exceed not the limits. Truly, God loves not the ones who exceed the limits.* (5:87) Usury is forbidden, for it means devouring other people's substance wrongfully and involves injustice on both sides: *God eliminates usury, and He causes charity to increase. And God loves not any sinful ingrate.* (2:279)

THE SELFISH CRITICAL THINKER•

Selfish critical thinkers are unjust and unfair, egocentric people who use their thinking to get what they want, without considering how their actions might affect other people. They are good at thinking, and they know it. But they are also very selfish. They may be greedy and unkind as well.

Here is the voice of the selfish critical thinker: I think a lot! It helps me get what I want. I believe whatever I want to believe as long as it gets me what I want. I question anyone who asks me to do what I don't want to do.I figure out how to get other people to do what I want them to do. I even figure out how to avoid thinking if I want. Sometimes I say 'I can't!' when I know I could but don't want to. You can get what you want from people if you know how to manipulate them. Just the other night, I talked my parents into buying me a really expensive new computer gadget I knew they couldn't really afford. But hey, they work don't they? They can always make more money. I'm their kid so they should give me what I want. It helps to tell people what they want to hear. Of course, sometimes what they want to hear isn't true, but that doesn't matter because you only get into trouble when you tell people what they don't want to hear. You can always trick people if you know how. Guess what, you can even trick yourself if you know how."

DEVELOP QUESTIONS ABOUT THE QUESTION•

Who can best phrase this question?
Is there another way to put this question?
What is the advantage of putting the question this way?
How would you put the question?
We can ask questions about questions.
Question: How does the Quran teach us to think critically?

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN

Choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I found that sometimes I am not fair-minded.
I was able to contrast the reasoning of a believer and an ungrateful person based on Quranic signs.
I gained insight into fair-mindedness and developing a sense of justice when I considered multiple points of view.

LESSON 37(2). CRITICAL THINKING MORAL TRAIT FAIRNESS (NOT SELF-SERVING OR EGOCENTRIC, TO BE FAIR)

Having a sense fairness is described as in the Quran as having wisdom (*hikmah)*. It is considered to be the ability to form judgments that are free from discrimination or dishonesty. It is to have experience, knowledge and good or right judgment. As 54:49 below tells us: *We created all things in measure*. Out of these develops a sense of impartiality so that we learn to weigh two differing points of view equally.

Developing a sense of fairness, described as wisdom in the Quranic perspective, is the ability to make judgments free from discrimination or dishonesty. Having wisdom is to have experience, knowledge and good judgment. From this fair-mindedness or wisdom comes a sense of impartiality, that is, an inclination to weigh two views or opinions equally.

Using a sense of fairnesss when weighing two views or opinions helps us overcome any lingering egocentricity. We may have thought that they knew the truth only to find that they were wrong. They also learn not to judge any ideas until they are familiar with them and they have fully understood them.

Thinking critically, we are able to consider both the strengths and the weaknesses of differing points of view. We learn to put ourselves in place of others in order to understand us and what we are saying. We learn to overcome our self-centered point of view of identifying truth with our immediate perceptions or long-held beliefs. We gain the ability to accurately state the viewpoints and reasoning of others. We reason from premises, assumptions and ideas that are not our own. We can recall times when we were wrong but convinced that we were right. We begin to realize that our behavior and judgments affect others so that we learn to see things from another's point of view.

Realizing that our classmate may see things differently then we do, teachers may ask:

What is your classmate angry about?
Why does that make him/her mad?
So-and-so, is that right?

Consider the reasons for positions that you disagree with, for example, that of their parents or siblings.

Why doesn't your mother want you to such-and-such?
Why does she think it's bad for you (wrong, etc.)?
What does she think will happen?

Teachers can ask those who have not yet expressed themselves:

What makes sense about what each side said?
What seems wrong?
What aren't you sure about?

QURANIC CHAPTER 54: THE MOON (AL-QAMAR) SIGNS 54:23-54:40

Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (54:23)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (54:24)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (54:25)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (54:26)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (54:27)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (54:28)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (54:29)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (54:30)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (54:31)
Makkah: *Certainly, We made the Quran easy as a Remembrance. Then, is there one who recalls?* (54:32)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (54:33)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (54:34)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (54:35)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (54:36)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (54:37)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (54:38)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (54:39)
Makkah: *Certainly, We made the Quran easy as a Remembrance. Then, is there one who recalls?* (54:40)[4]

QURANIC CHAPTER 54: THE MOON (AL-QAMAR) SIGNS 54:41-54:55

Makkah: Book 27: Moses and the People of Pharaoh (54:41)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and the People of Pharaoh (54:42)
Are ones who are ungrateful better than those (the people of Pharaoh)*? Or have you an immunity in the ancient scrolls?* (54:43)
Or say they: We are aided altogether. (54:44)
Their multitude will be put to flight and they will turn their backs. (54:45)
Nay! The Hour is what is promised them and the Hour will be more calamitous and more distasteful. (54:46)

Truly, ones who sin are going astray and insane. (54:47)
On a Day they will be dragged into the fire on their faces:
Experience the touch of Saqar! (54:48)
Truly, We created all things in measure (54:49)
and Our command is not but
one as the twinkling of the eye. (54:50)
And, certainly, We caused to perish their partisans.
Is there, then, one who recalls? (54:51)
And everything they accomplished
is in the ancient scrolls. (54:52)
And every small and great thing is that which is written. (54:53)
Truly, the ones who are Godfearing
will be in Gardens and rivers, (54:54)
in positions of sincerity
near an Omnipotent King. (55:55)

COMMENTARY°

A NEW AND POWERFUL WARNING

The chapter makes a general address, wondering at their attitude, particularly when they inspect their forces and feel themselves very powerful. They claim that they cannot be defeated: (54:44) At this point, a clear and decisive statement is loudly echoed: (54:45) Neither large forces to them is none other than God Almighty. It came true at the time and it will always be true.

The chapter leaves it aside to speak about the one that is to follow: (54:46) It is far more bitter and terrible than any suffering they could ever experience in this life on earth. It is more calamitous than any scene of punishment drawn for their understanding: worse than the floods, the howling, cold wind, the blast, the stone-bearing wind and Pharaoh and his host's drowning.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 54:41-54:55

WHO IS GOD, THE LORD?

God took the people of Pharaoh who denied the signs. God created all things in measure and His command is not but as the twinkling of the eye.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The ungrateful will be punished. It is they who are going astray and insane. while the Godfearing will be in Gardens and rivers in positions of sincerity near an Omnipotent King.

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN

Choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE STUDENTS•

Do I have any vested interest in judging this issue?
Am I sympathetically representing the viewpoints of others?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I tested myself before I went to class by trying to summarize, orally or in writing, the main points of the previous class meeting because I realize if I cannot summarize main points, I haven't learned them.
I learned to test my thinking using intellectual standards: Being clear, accurate, relevant, precise, reasonable.

LESSON 38(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY

GENERATING IMPLICATIONS, CONSEQUENCES (PONDER, EVALUATE)

Implications follow from our thoughts. Consequences follow from our actions. Our ability to reason well is measured in part by an ability to understand and enunciate the implications and, then, the consequences of the reasoning. For example: I think this or that. What does this thought imply? What would be the consequences if I were to act upon that thought?

The ungrateful referred to in these signs (38:1-38:14) do not consider the long term implications of their thoughts and words because of their pride. The Quran tells them what the consequences will be for them: (38:14).

Have you succeeded in identifying significant and realistic implications?
Have you confined yourselves to unimportant and unrealistic ones?
Have you enunciated the implications of your views clearly
and precisely enough to permit your thinking to be evaluated
by the validity of those implications?
Can you trace the implications and consequences that come from your reasoning?

An example is the dream of Abraham and the implications it had for Abraham and his son and the consequences:

So We gave [Abraham] *the good tidings of a forbearing boy. When he reached maturity endeavoring with him,* [Abraham] *said: O my son! Truly, I see while slumbering that I am sacrificing you. So what do you think?*

[His son] *said: O my father! Accomplish whatever you are commanded. You will find me, if God willed, of the ones who remain steadfast.*

Then, when they both submitted themselves to God and he flung him on his brow, We cried out to him: O Abraham! Surely, you established the dream as true! Thus, We give recompense to the ones who are doers of good. Truly, that was, certainly, the clear trial. Then, We redeemed [Abraham] *with a sublime slaughter and We left for him a good name with the later ones: Peace be on Abraham! Thus, We give recompense to the ones who are doers of good. Truly, he is one of Our believing servants.*(37:101-37:111)

QURANIC CHAPTER 38: SAAD (SAAD)
SIGNS 38:1-38:14

Makkah: *Saad. By the Quran,*
Possessor of the Remembrance. (38:1)
Nay! Those who were ungrateful
are in vainglory and breach. (38:2)

How many before them
have We caused to perish of generations!
And they cried out but there was no time
for escape for awhile. (38:3)
And they marveled that drew near them
one who warns from among themselves.
And the ones who are ungrateful said:
This is one who is a sorcerer, a liar. (38:4)
Made He all gods One God?
Truly, this is an astounding thing! (38:5)
And the Council set out from them, saying:
Be gone! And have patience with your gods.
Truly, this is a thing to be wanted! (38:6)
We heard not the like of this in the later creed.
This is only made up tales! (38:7)
Was the Remembrance only caused to descend
to him from among us?
Nay! They are in uncertainty about My Remembrance.
Nay! They experience not My punishment! (38:8)
Or are they owners of the treasures of mercy of your Lord,
The Almighty, The Giver? (38:9)
Or is theirs the dominion of the heavens and the earth
and what is between them?
Let them climb up with cords! (38:10)
Their horde is one that is put to flight
among the confederates. (38:11)
Makkah: Book 25: People of Noah, Hud and the People of Aad; Book 27: Moses and the Pharaoh (38:12)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud; Book 26: The People of Lot; Book 27: Shuayb (Jethro) and the People of Midian, the Companions of the Woods (38:13)
All of them denied the Messengers
so My repayment was realized. (38:14)[15]

COMMENTARY°

Revealed in Makkah, this chapter addresses three issues: God's Oneness, revelation, and the reckoning on the Day of Judgment. These three issues are discussed in its first section. Here the Makkan elders' amazement at the Prophet's call on them to believe in God's Oneness and that he was chosen by God to be His Messenger is described: (38:4-38:8)

Basically, they found it impossible to believe that God would choose one of their own number to deliver His message and more-

over that this person should be Muhammad ibn Abd Allah who had not held a position of authority among them. Therefore, in reply to their question about His choice, God too questions them: (38:9-38:10) This tells them that when God wishes to open the gates of His mercy to anyone, nothing can withhold it. They are further told that human beings own nothing in the heavens and earth; it is a matter of God's sustenance and mercy, which He bestows on whomever He wishes. It is He who chooses those He knows to deserve His bounty and bestows on them whatever He will, without limit or restriction.

The chapter also includes a special touch that is meant to alert hearts to the truth reflected in the creation of the heavens and earth. This is the truth that God wants to establish on earth through the messengers He sends. The two are interrelated: (38:27)

QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS•

If Abraham decides to act on the implications of his dream, what would happen?

If Abraham decides not to act on the implications of his dream, what would happen?

What is Abraham implying from his words to his son?

What is likely to happen if Abraham does this as opposed to not doing it?

Is Abraham's dream implying that he should sacrifice his son?

How significant are the implications of Abraham's decision?

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 38:1-38:14

WHO IS GOD, THE LORD?

God swears an oath by the Quran which possesses the Remembrance. The ungrateful are in uncertainty about God's Remembrance.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quranic message asks Prophet Muhammad directly: Are the ungrateful owners of the treasures of mercy of **your** Lord, Muhammad? Are they the sovereigns of the heavens and the earth and what is between them? Let them climb up with ropes. Their horde is one that will be put to flight.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The ungrateful are steeped in conceit and arrogance. They forget how many generations were caused to perish because of this kind of attitude. They marvel that someone from among themselves is bringing them this warning. They call him a sorcerer, a liar because he calls for all gods to be One God. Their leader tells them to be patient and maintain their gods because they

never heard such things from previous creeds. They are only made up tales that Muhammad speaks of.

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN

Choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities.

I learned that implications come from my thoughts.
I learned that consequences follow from my actions.

LESSON 38(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY GENERATING OR ASSESSING SOLUTIONS

Quranic critical thinkers ask questions to reach solutions. They try to find the best solution they can by evaluating solutions through comparing them to each other as the Quran does in 38:28: *Or will We make those who have believed....*

The solution? *Reflect on the signs* (38:29) Thus, it is not an evaluation independent of the various issues, but by comparing the various possibilities. Quranic critical thinkers are not hasty. They examine a problem or issue at length. Quranic thinkers are also known as creative thinkers, thinkers who generate various possible solutions in order to find the best one. It may be that an issue or problem persists because the best possible answer has not as yet been found.

As a result, Quranic creative thinkers use all the information that the Quranic signs give them relevant to that particular issue or problem. Solutions are implied in many of the implications that the Quranic signs give. Once you become familiar with the implications present in various Quranic signs, you develop a certain flexibility and imagination in trying to solve problems even going so far as trying new types of solutions. As Quranic creative thinkers you are fair-minded. You take the interests of others into account when generating solutions. You are realistic in your approach not seeking a solution that you want, but finding the best solution possible.

When presenting question-answer lessons or activities, the Quranic text tends to provide lists of steps that do not limit the process. For example, it encourages you to consider how the Quranic message answered the same or a similar question.

The best way to develop insight into this is to ask questions. If the first attempt fails or causes other issues, you should consider why and try again. Thus, you can learn the practical difficulties involved in discovering and implementing a workable answer.

It is recommended that the you first state the question. If that has not been done, you should explore the causes at length, exploring and evaluating multiple perspectives. Integrate the strong points within each view. As the process of exploring answers proceeds, you may find it useful to reformulate the description of the question.

You can evaluate the Quranic text's statement of the question and its causes, evaluate the answer tried, and propose and evaluate alternatives. You should be encouraged to explore the beliefs underlying various choices of answers you give to questions such as 38:27 and 38:28 to follows.•

QURANIC CHAPTER 38: SAAD (SAAD)
SIGNS 38:15-38:26

Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud; Book 26: The People of Lot; Book 27: Shuayb (Jethro) and the People of Midian, the Companions of the Woods (38:15)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud; Book 26: The People of Lot; Book 27: Shuayb (Jethro) and the People of Midian, the Companions of the Woods (38:16)
Makkah: Book 28: David (38:17)
Makkah: Book 28: David (38:18)
Makkah: Book 28: David (38:19)
Makkah: Book 28: David (38:20)
Makkah: Book 28: David (38:21)
Makkah: Book 28: David (38:22)
Makkah: Book 28: David (38:23)
Makkah: Book 28: David (38:24)
Makkah: Book 28: David (38:25)
Makkah: Book 28: David (38:26)

QURANIC CHAPTER 38: SAAD (SAAD)
SIGNS 38:27-38:40

And We created not the heaven and the earth
and whatever is between the two in falsehood.
That is the opinion of those who are ungrateful.
And woe to those who are ungrateful in the fire! (38:27)
Or will We make those who have believed
and the ones who have acted in accord with morality
like the ones who make corruption in and on the earth?
Or will We make the ones who are Godfearing
as the ones who act immorally? (38:28)
It is a blessed Book that We have sent forth to you
so that they may meditate on its signs
and those imbued with intuition may recollect. (38:29)
Makkah: Book 28 David and Solomon (38:30)
Makkah: Book 28 David and Solomon (38:31)
Makkah: Book 28 David and Solomon (38:32)
Makkah: Book 28 David and Solomon (38:33)
Makkah: Book 28 David and Solomon (38:34)
Makkah: Book 28 David and Solomon (38:35)
Makkah: Book 28 David and Solomon (38:36)

Makkah: Book 28 David and Solomon (38:37)
Makkah: Book 28 David and Solomon (38:38)
Makkah: Book 28 David and Solomon (38:39)
Makkah: Book 28 David and Solomon (38:40)

COMMENTARY

God reveals the truth in a variety of ways, some explicit and others by allusion, the latter mainly through the modality of the signs, in order to provoke and engage the human intellect. The signs of God cannot be read just off the face of the signs but require thinking and reflection. This is indicated in the phrase: *We will cause them to see Our signs on the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is The Truth.* (41:53) which suggests that the signs may not be instantaneously visible to the naked eye.

The whole concept of the signs seeks to forge a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: (38:29) A sign is also a portent and allusion to something other than itself and should not therefore be seen as the final message and purpose of the revelation containing it.[95]

Having stated the main principle in conducting the position of vicegerent on earth and in judging people's disputes, the context of the truth on which the whole system that sustains the universe is based is then stated. Broader as it is than our whole world and role, this basic truth deals with the very existence of the universe and with the life to come. Furthermore, the last divine message to humanity is based on this truth. Indeed, the Quran is the book that explains this great truth: (38:27-38:29)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 38:27-38:40

WHO IS GOD, THE LORD?

God did not create the heaven and earth and whatever is between without a purpose. God did not make those who have believed and the ones who have acted in accord with morality like the ones who make corruption in and on the earth. God did not make the ones who are Godfearing to be ones who act immorally.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quranic message says directly to Prophet Muhammad: It is a blessed Book that We have sent forth to **you**, Muhammad, so that they may meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition may recollect.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

God did not create the heaven and earth and whatever is between without purpose as the ungrateful think. The message tells the believers: God did not make those who have believed and the ones who have acted in accord with morality like the ones who make corruption in and on the earth. God did not make the ones who are Godfearing to be ones who act immorally.

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN

Choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

Rather than simply asking if a given solution is good, be prepared for an extended discussion of such questions as:

What solution does these signs offer?
What are the effects?
Who is affected?
Did it have the desired effects?
Undesirable effects?
What should be done differently?
What should we do now to rectify the problems that action caused?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I learned about generating solutions to problems from the questions the Quran asks:

Or will We make those who have believed and the ones who have acted in accord with morality like the ones who make corruption in and on the earth?
Or will We make the ones who are Godfearing as the ones who act immorally? (38:28)

Lesson 38(3). Critical Thinking Strategy
Exploring Implications and Consequences

Quranic thinkers learn to recognize the implications of Quranic signs that are made and what follows from them. In this way they develop a more complete understanding of the meaning of a sign. Quranic thinkers recognize that if they are to accept the statement in a Quranic sign, they also have to accept its implications. Statement: *This is a Remembrance....* (38:49); implications: *for ones who are Godfearing, it will result in a good destination.* There is no limit to the extent of this process. When taking beliefs into consideration, beliefs that relate to actions or behavior, they consider the consequences of acting on those beliefs.

Quranic Chapter 38: Saad (Saad)
Signs 38:41-38:64

Makkah: Book 26: Job (38:41)
Makkah: Book 26: Job (38:42)
Makkah: Book 26: Job (38:43)
Makkah: Book 26: Job and His Wife (38:44)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (38:45)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (38:46)
Makkah: Book 26: Ishmael; Book 28: Elijah (Elisha), Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl), Ezra (38:47)
Makkah: Book 26: Ishmael; Book 28: Elijah (Elisha), Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl), Ezra(38:48)
Makkah: *This is a Remembrance.*
And, truly, for ones who are Godfearing this is,
certainly, a goodly destination, (38:49)
the Gardens of Eden, the doors,
ones that are opened up for them. (38:50)
Ones who are reclining in them.
They will call for many sweet fruits and drink in it. (38:51)
And with them will be ones who are restraining their (f) glance,
persons of the same age. (38:52)
This is what you are promised for the Day of Reckoning. (38:53)
Truly, this is Our provision.
For it, there is no coming to an end. (38:54)
This is so.
And, truly, for ones who are defiant,
there will be a worse destination, (38:55)
hell, where they will roast.
And miserable will be the cradling! (38:56)

This is so!
Then, let them experience this—scalding water and filth (38:57)
and other torment of a like kind in pairs. (38:58)
This is a unit, one that rushes in with you.
There is no welcome for them!
Truly, they are ones who roast in the fire. (38:59)
They said: Nay! You! There is no welcome for you.
It is you who put this forward on us.
Miserable will be the stopping place! (38:60)
They said: Our Lord!
Whoever put this forward for us,
increase him with a double punishment in the fire. (38:61)
And they said: What is the matter with us
that we see not men whom we had been
numbering among the worst? (38:62)
Took We them to ourselves as a laughing-stock
or swerved our sight from them? (38:63)
Truly, this is true of the disagreement
of the people of the fire. (38:64)

COMMENTARY°

The Godfearing will be in gardens of perpetual bliss, with gates wide open, where every comfort is available and they are well seated, enjoying all the food and drink they desire, as also female companions of the same age: (38:49-38:58)

The arrogant Makkan chiefs will realize this when they see their fate and compare it with that of the weak elements on whom they poured their derision, claiming that God's mercy would never he shown to those so weak. The scene so described provides contrasting images: (38:49-38:52)

On the other hand: (38:55-38:58) They will argue, quarrel and curse one another in hell, and they will remember how they used to ridicule the believers: (38:62-38:63) They cannot find such people in hell, because they are the ones who belong to heaven. This then is the answer to both their hastening of God's punishment and their ridicule of the believers. This scene forms the third part of the chapter.

Now they are depicted as going straight to hell, one lot after another, with some referring to others and saying: (38:59) What answer do they receive? It is an angry and rash one: (38:59) Would those who heard this insult take it in silence? Not they! Their response comes quickly: (38:60) This is a direct accusation, blaming them for bringing about such a fate. They follow this accusation with a prayer

that reveals how angry they are, wishing to wreak revenge on the others: (38:61)

What happens next? They look around searching for the believers whom they treated with arrogance in their first life, thinking ill of them and ridiculing their claims. They do not see them rushing into the fire alongside them. Therefore, they ask: Where are they? Where have they gone?

Or could it he that they are here but our vision is impaired so we do not see them: (38:62-38:63) Yet those who are missed by the dwellers of hell are enjoying their abode in heaven.

The scene concludes with a statement about the actual situation of the people of hell: (38:64) There is a wide gulf between their fate and that of the believers whom they ridiculed and refused to believe would be God's chosen ones. How miserable is their own lot which they were once keen to hasten: (38:16)

LESSON 38(3). SUMMARY OF SIGNS 38:41-38:64

WHO IS GOD, THE LORD?

God promises the Gardens of Eden to the ones who are Godfearing and the defiant will face a miserable cradling in hell.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The Godfearing shall have a goodly destination while the ones who are defiant will roast in hell.

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN

Choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS•

What does this imply? mean? If this is true, what else must be true?
What were, or would be, the consequences of this action?
How do you know? Why wouldn't this happen instead?
Are the consequences desirable? Why or why not?

Explore the implications and consequences of your own beliefs. During dialogical exchanges, you can compare the implications of ideas from different perspectives and the consequences of accepting each perspective:

How would someone who believes this act?
What result would that have?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

How would you evaluate yourself at this point? I am at:•

Stage One: The Unreflective Thinker unaware of significant problems in my thinking)
Stage Two: The Challenged Thinker aware of problems in my thinking
Stage Three: The Beginning Thinker trying to improve but without regular practice
Stage Four: The Practicing Thinker who recognizes the necessity of regular practice
Stage Five: The Advanced Thinker who knows I advance in accordance with my practice
Stage Six: The Master Thinker: skilled and insightful thinking has become second nature to me

Are you able to write a DBQ (Document Based Question) to examine a point of view of an author using an analytical tool called SOAPS?

S = subject: What is the Quranic sign about (make it brief, one sentence)
O = occasion: What is going on at the time?
A = audience: To whom is it addressed?
P = purpose: What is the purpose of the Quranic sign?
S = speaker: Who is the speaker? Give some information about this person.

LESSON 38(4). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL STANDARD

CLARITY• (UNDERSTANDABLE, TO BE CLEAR)

The word "clarification" or to be clear (*bayan*) occurs over two hundred times in the Quran. The Quranic message describes itself as being clear, having clear signs, making things clear. The clarification in the Quranic message is to guide us to the distinction between truth and error.

Clarity means to be understandable such that the meaning can be grasped; to be free from confusion or ambiguity, to remove obscurities as the Prophet is told to say clearly: *I ask for no compensation for this nor am I one who invents what is revealed to me.* (38:86) Clarity is essential as an opening or beginning or gateway standard because if a statement is unclear, it cannot determined if it is accurate or relevant. In fact, nothing can be determined about it because you may not as yet know what it means. They can only assume that we understand a thought when we can elaborate on it, illustrate it and give an example of it.

In order to help us clarify our thinking, we should try to figure out the meaning of what the Quranic message here is saying. Explain your understanding of an issue mentioned in the following Quranic section (*ruku*) to someone else to help clarify it in your own mind.

Practice summarizing in your own words what the Quranic section or sign(s) is saying. Then ask:

Did I understand the sign(s) correctly?
Did I agree or disagree with what my classmate said before I clearly understood what the Quranic text is saying?
Did I feel that I was thinking clearly?
Did I feel my thinking was vague, muddled, deceptive or misleading?

Summarize in your own words what you think the Quran said.
Give one point at a time, explain it and elaborate on what you mean.
Mention a life experience that illustrates the point in hand.
Use metaphors or analogies to help connect their ideas to things you have already understood.

Being clear about what you think when you read a sign(s) of the Quran, helps you understand what the analytic, evaluative and creative process is.

Quranic Chapter 38: Saad (Saad)
Signs 38:65-38:88

Makkah: *Say: I am only one who warns.*
And there is no god but God,
The One, The Omniscient, (38:65)
the Lord of the heavens and the earth
and whatever is between them,
The Almighty, The Forgiver. (38:66)
Say: It is a serious tiding (38:67)
from which you are ones who turn aside. (38:68)
I had been without knowledge of the lofty Council
when they are striving against one another. (38:69)
It is revealed to me only that I am a warner,
one who makes clear. (38:70)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (38:71)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (38:72)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (38:73)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (38:74)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (38:75)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (38:76)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (38:77)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (38:78)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (38:79)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (38:80)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (38:81)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (38:82)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (38:83)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (38:84)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (38:85)
Makkah: *Say: I ask of you not for any compensation for this nor*
am I among the ones who take things upon themselves. (38:86)
It is nothing other than a Remembrance for the worlds (38:87)
and you will, certainly, know its tidings after awhile. (38:88)

Commentary°

The chapter concludes by reconfirming the fact of revelation, and the great issue behind it. Needless to say, the ungrateful remain oblivious to these facts. (38:65-38:66)

The Prophet is given instructions as to what to say to the idolaters who were surprised and amazed at what he preached, wondering: (38:5) He is to say to them that this is the plain truth: There is

no god but God, the One who conquers all. He is to further inform them that he himself has no say in all this, apart from giving warnings and leaving people to their Lord to judge. He is the Lord of the heavens and the earth and all that is between. He has no partners. No one can find shelter against His will whether it be in the heavens and the earth, or in between them. For He is the Almighty, the All-Forgiving. He has all power and He forgives anyone seeking forgiveness and who turns back to Him in repentance.

The Prophet's instructions make it clear that what he has brought people is far greater than what they think, and that it is a prelude to something they choose to remain oblivious of: (38:67-38:68) It is indeed far greater than it appears at first sight. It is part of God's will that applies to the entire universe and its system. It cannot be separated from the creation of the heavens and the earth, or from the distant past and the far away future.

This message is addressed to people far beyond the Quraysh in Makkah, the Arabs in their Peninsula and the generation that witnessed its revelation. It transcends the boundaries of place and time to address humanity across all generations, shaping its destiny, from the time of its revelation until God inherits the earth and all those living on it. It came at its appropriate time to fulfil its mission in the time set for it by God.

Humanity's course has been changed with this great message: It is now set on a path demarcated by God. This is true both with regard to those who accept it or reject it, fight for or against it, and in its then current generation or subsequent ones. Nothing and no event in the history of humanity has had greater influence on the human being than this message. It laid down concepts, rules and systems and set values that apply to the whole earth, for all times.

The Arabs of old thought that the matter concerned them and Muhammad, not least the fact that it was he who was chosen to receive revelations. All their worry focused on this question. Therefore, the Quran tells them that the matter is far greater than this issue. It is greater than them and Muhammad who is no more than a messenger delivering what was entrusted to him. He did not invent it, and he could not have learnt what lies beyond it until God had taught him. He was not present with those on high when it all began. It was God who told him of it: (38:69-38:70)

This last part of the chapter concludes with a clear statement from the Prophet: (38:86-38:88)

The chapter takes us on a round in which we see what lies in store beyond the Day of Judgment, giving us images of happiness and bliss on the one hand, and torment on the other.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 38:65-38:70

WHO IS GOD?

The Quranic message makes it very clear that there is no god but God, The One, The Omniscient, the Lord of the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them, The Almighty, The Forgiver.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quranic message tells Prophet Muhammad to say to the unbelievers: The Quranic message is a serious tiding from which they turn away, that he did not know about the lofty Council striving against one another, but that it has been revealed to him that he is only a warner, one who makes God's message clear.

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN

Choose a particular sign (*ayah*) and rewrite it in your own words and analyze it.

QUESTIONS THAT FOCUS ON CLARITY IN THINKING INCLUDE•

Let me state in my own words what I think you just said.
Am I clear about your meaning?
I hear you saying "____."
Am I hearing you correctly, or have I misunderstood you?
What is the main point of this Quranic section?
Can you explain further its main point on accidental killing of a Muslim?
Can you give an example of its main point on accidental killing of a Muslim?
To give you an analogy...(give an illustration of tyrants who kill believers because they say that they believe in God)
To give you an analogy ... (give an illustration of Muslim tyrants who kill other Muslims because they have determined that these people are not Muslim. They are not Muslim because the only Muslims are the ones who follow their ideology.)
Does such a view go against the Quranic sign? Explain.

TO CLARIFY STUDENTS' THINKING, CONSIDER ASKING THE FOLLOWING•

Can you restate the points of the Quranic sign in your own words?
I didn't understand you.
Can you give an example?
Let me tell you what I understand you to be saying.
Did I understand you correctly?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

When I focused on clarity, I began to notice when I was being unclear in communicating with others.

When I was reading, I began to notice when I was clear about what I was reading.

I focused on the four techniques of clarification:

1. Stating what you are saying explicitly and precisely (with careful consideration given to my choice of words),
2. Elaborating on my meaning in other words,
3. Giving examples of what I mean from experiences I have had.
4. I used analogies, metaphors, pictures, or diagrams to illustrate what I meant. In other words, I frequently **stated, elaborated, illustrated** and **exemplified** my points.

APPENDIX 1: LIFE OF THE PROPHET IN YEAR 3 OF THE REVELATION

Lesson 31(2). It is reported that signs (75:32-75:40) refer to a particular person, Abu Jahl Amr ibn Hisham, who used to visit the Prophet sometimes and listen to the Quran. He would then go away, refusing to believe. In fact, he was neither polite nor fearful of God. He would continue to hurt the Prophet by what he said, and would try to turn people away from the Quranic message. He would also take pride in such actions, treating his evil deeds as something to be proud of. The Quran derides his attitude. In its description of his arrogant movements, it invites the listeners scorn.

On one occasion, the Prophet held Abu Jahl by the scruff of his neck and used this expression as it occurs in the chapter: *Woe to you! And woe to you! Again woe to you! And woe to you!* (75:34-75:35) Abu Jahl said: Are you threatening me, Muhammad? By God, neither you nor your Lord can do anything to me. I am the most powerful man ever to walk in between these hills.

Before him, Pharaoh said to the chiefs of his people: *O Council! I know not of any god for you other than me.* (28:38) He also said: *O my folk! Is not the dominion of Egypt for me and these rivers running beneath me?* (43:51) Yet God smote him down, drowned him.

Lesson 32. Whenever Umayya ibn Khalf ibn Wahb ibn Hudayifa ibn Jumah saw the Messenger, he slandered and reviled him so God sent down (104:1-104:9) concerning him.

Lesson 33(1). Abu Hurayrah says that: *By ones who are sent successively,* (77:1) is a reference to the angels. The same is reported to have been said by Masruq, Abu al-Duha, Mujahid (in one report), al-Suddi, al-Rabr ibn Anas and Abu Salih. Thus, the sign means an oath by the angels that are sent forth in successive waves, like running horses. Abu Salih says that the next four signs also refer to the angels.

Ibn Masud is reported to have said that: *By ones who are sent successively* refers to the wind, which means that winds are sent in succession like horses running. He is reported to have said that those storming on and scattering far and wide [mentioned in the next two signs] also refer to the wind. This view is shared by Ibn Abbas, Mujahid (in a second report), Qatadah and in another report by Abu Salih.

Ibn Jarir al-Tabari is uncertain whether *By ones who are sent successively,* mentioned in the first sign, refers to the angels or to the wind, but he is certain that the stormers and scatterers are the winds.

He explains that the winds scatter the clouds in the sky.

Ibn Masud says that: *The ones who separate a separating by ones who cast a remembrance as excusing or warning* (77:4-77:6) refer to the angels. This is also stated by Ibn Abbas, Masruq, Mujahid, Qatadah, al-Rabr ibn Anas, al-Suddl and al-Thawri. It is the angels that come down carrying Gods orders to His messengers, separating right from wrong, and giving revelations to those messengers that contain justification and a warning to humanity.

Lesson 34(2). In a hadith reported by Alqamah on the authority of Bilal ibn al-Harith, the Prophet is quoted as saying: A person may say a word that is pleasing to God, without a thought of how far it can reach. God will credit him with His pleasure for it until the Day when he meets Him. Another person may say a word that is displeasing to God, without a thought of how far it can reach. God will record against him His displeasure for it until the Day when he meets Him.

The Prophet is quoted as saying: How can I feel happy when I know that the one assigned to blow the Trumpet has lifted it to his mouth, lowering his forehead and awaiting permission. The people listening asked him: What should we say, Messenger of God? He replied: Say: We seek none other than God; He is the best protector. They all said it. [Related by al-Tirmidhl.]

Lesson 36. According to Tustari, these signs (86:1-86:3) were revealed about Abu Talib. He once went to visit the Prophet and the latter offered him bread and milk. As Abu Talib was sitting and eating, a meteor fell, filling everything with fire. Abu Talib was scared. He asked: What on earth can this be? The Prophet, God bless him and give him peace, said: This is a meteor that was thrown and it is one of the signs of God. Abu Talib was amazed, and so God, exalted is He, revealed these signs.

Lesson 37(1). Anas ibn Malik reports: The people of Makkah asked the Prophet to show them a miracle, and the moon was split in Makkah twice. He recited: *The Hour neared and the moon was split.* (54:1)

The same report by Anas is given in another version stating the people's request for a miracle, then saying: He showed them the moon split in two halves, and they could see Mount Hira in between.[77]

Jubayr ibn Mutim reports: The moon was split during the Prophet's lifetime and it was seen in two halves, one over each mountain. People said: Muhammad has cast a magic spell on us. Then they said: If he could cast a spell on us, he cannot do that to all people.[78]

Ibn Abbas is quoted by various transmitters as having said: The moon was once split during the Prophet;'s lifetime.[79] Other versions

add: This took place before the Prophet's migration to Madinah. They could see its two halves. Yet another version related by al-Tabarani with a different chain of transmitters quotes Ibn Abbas as saying: The moon was eclipsed during the Prophet's time. The ungrateful said: A spell is cast on the moon. A Quranic revelation was bestowed from on high stating: *The Hour neared and the moon was split.*

Abd Allah ibn Umar said: The moon was split in two halves during the Prophet's time in Makkah, with one half seen at the near side of the mountain and the other at the far side. The Prophet said: My Lord! Be my witness.[80]

Abd Allah ibn Masud reports: During the Prophet's time, the moon was split in two and people could see it. The Prophet said: Look at it and be witnesses.[81]

Al-Bukhari adds another version of this report with a different chain of transmitters quoting Ibn Masud: When the moon was split, the Quraysh said. Wait until some travelers arrive, for Muhammad cannot cast his spell on all people. When travelers came they confirmed the splitting of the moon.

This is a highly inspiring opening, speaking of a momentous event in the wide universe that heralds an immeasurably greater event: *The Hour neared and the moon was split.* (54:1) What a piece of news! They saw the first event with their own eyes, and they can only anticipate the greater one. The splitting of the moon, witnessed by the Arabs, is confirmed in numerous reports; all agree that this took place, though they differ in their general and detailed descriptions of how it occurred.

One version of a report states: This took place before the Prophet's migration to Madinah. They could see its two halves. Yet another version related by al-Tabarani with a different chain of transmitters quotes Ibn Abbas as saying: The moon was eclipsed during the Prophet's time. The ungrateful said: A spell is cast on the moon.

A Quranic revelation was bestowed from on high stating: *The Hour neared and the moon was split.*

Having given a full picture of their stubborn rejection, the chapter directs the Prophet to turn away from them, leaving them to face their fate on the day to the approach of which they pay little heed, despite seeing a sign like the splitting of the moon heralding it: *So turn you away from them on a Day when One Who Calls will call to a horrible thing. Their sight will be that which is humbled and they will go forth from the tombs as if they had been dispersed locusts, ones who run forward with their eyes fixed in horror towards The One Who Calls. The ones who are ungrateful will say: This is a difficult Day!* (54:6-54:8) These signs paint a scene of that day which

is fierce and grim, consistent with the ambience of the chapter. They also warn of the closeness of the Last Hour, highlighted by the splitting of the moon in two. All of this fits perfectly with the rhythm maintained throughout the chapter.

Such, then, is the day which draws near; still they continue to deny it. Therefore, the Prophet is to turn away from them when that day arrives. He is to leave them to face their miserable destiny.

Wahidi says: The moon was split at the time of the Messenger of God so the Quraysh said: This is an act of sorcery from the son of Abu Kabshah; he has cast a spell on you. Ask, therefore, the travelers whether they saw the moon split. They asked some travelers and they confirmed it. God, exalted is He, then revealed 54:1-2.[82]

The Quran clearly stated this event to the ungrateful at the time, but there is no report to suggest that they ever denied it. It must, then, have happened in a way that makes denial practically impossible. Had there been a way to deny it, they would have done so, if only for the sake of meaningless argument. All that has been reported of their reactions are their statements that the Prophet had cast a magic spell on them. Yet they too directly witnessed the event and so knew for themselves that this was no magic. Had the Prophet been able to cast a spell on them, he could not have done the same to the travelers in the desert. Such travelers, let us recall, confirmed that they had witnessed this extraordinary event.

Lesson 37(2). The Quraysh came to dispute the question of Destiny. (54:47-54:49) God, therefore revealed: (54:49-54:50) (Abul-Qasim Abd al-Rahman ibn Muhammad al-Sarraj informed us (by dictation)> Abu Muhammad Abd God ibn Muhammad ibn Musa al-Kabi> Hamdan ibn Salih al-Ashajj> Abdullah ibn Abd al-Aziz ibn Abi Rawwad> Sufyan al-Thawri> Ziyad ibn Ismail al-Makhzumi> Muhammad ibn Abbad ibn Jafar> Abu Hurayrah said. Also, this was narrated by Muslim from Abu Bakr ibn Abi Shaybah> Waki'> Sufyan.)

By God, I bear witness that I heard the Messenger of God say: This sign was revealed about the deniers of Destiny (*al-Qadariyyah*): (Signs 54:49-54:50). (By God, I bear witness that Abul-Harith Muhammad ibn Abd al-Rahim al-Hafiz informed us in Jurjan; he said: By God, I bear witness that Abu Nuaym Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Ibrahim al-Bazzaz informed us; he said: By God, I bear witness that I heard Ali ibn Jandal saying: By God, I bear witness that I heard Abul Hasan Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Ubayy in Khurasan say: By God, I bear witness that I heard Abdullah ibn al-Saqr al-Hafiz say: By God, I bear witness that I heard Ufayr ibn Madan say: By God, I bear witness that I heard Salim ibn Amir say: By God, I bear

witness that I heard Abu Umamah al-Bahili say.)

The bishop of Najran came to the Messenger of God and said: O Muhammad, you claim that sins are created by measure and that the seas and heaven are also created by measure. If it is true that the seas and heaven are created by measure, sins nevertheless cannot be?

The Messenger of God said: You are God's adversary.

And then God, exalted is He, revealed Signs: (54:49-54:50). (Abu Bakr ibn al-Harith related to us> Abdullah ibn Muhammad al-Asfahani> Jarir ibn Harun> Ali al-Tanafisi> Ubayd Allah ibn Musa> Bahr al-Saqa> A Shaykh from Quraysh> Ata said.)

These signs (54:49-54:50) were revealed about some future people from amongst this community who will deny the Destiny of God. (Abu Bakr informed us> Abd Allah> Amr ibn Abd Allah ibn al-Hasan> Ahmad ibn al-Khalil> Abdullah ibn Raja al-Azdi> Amr ibn Ala, the brother of Abu Amr ibn al-Ala> Khalid ibn Salamah al-Qurayshi> Said ibn Amr ibn Jadah al-Makhzumi> Ibn Abi Zurarah al-Ansari> his father who related that the Messenger of God recited this sign.)

I was with Muhammad ibn Kab when he said: If you ever see me talk about Destiny, then tie me up for I am then a madman. By Him in Whose Hand is my soul, these signs have not been revealed except about madmen. Then he recited Signs (54:49-54:50). (. Ahmad ibn al-Hasan al-Hiri informed us> Muhammad ibn Yaqub al-Maqili> Abu Utbah Ahmad ibn al-Faraj> Baqiyyah> Ibn Thawban> Bakir ibn Usayd> his father said.)

Lesson 38(1). Ibn Abbas says regarding 38:6: Utbah and Shaybah, the sons of Rabiah, Ubayy Ibn Khalaf al- Jumahi and Abu Jahl Ibn Hisham (go about, exhorting) Abu Jahl said to them: (Go) to your deities (and be staunch to your gods) and persevere in the worship of your deities! (Lo! This) meaning Muhammad (is a thing designed) to perish; it is also said that this means: that which Muhammad is saying is designed to spread to all people of the earth. (38:6)

Conversion of the Various Clans

The Prophet continued to receive new converts throughout this year.

The Abd al-Dar Clan Converts

Abu al-Rum ibn Umayr: Brother of Musab ibn Umayr.[16]

Firas ibn al-Nadr ibn al-Harith: Brother of Musab ibn Umayr.[17]

Jahm ibn Qays ibn Abd ibn Shurahbil: Brother of Musab ibn Umayr.[18]

Abd ibn Qusayy Convert

Tulayb ibn Umayr ibn Wahb (son of paternal aunt, Arwah bint Abd al-Muttalib, of the Prophet).[19]

Abd al-Shams Clan Converts

Sahlah bint Suhayl ibn Amr: Her husband was Abu Hudhayfah ibn Utbah ibn Rabiah. She bore witness early and migrated with her husband to Abyssinia.[20]

Abu Hudhayfah ibn Utbah ibn Rabiah: He was the brother of the wife of Abu Sufyan, Hind bint Utbah. (d. 633).

Abd al-Shams Confederate

Abd Allah ibn Jahsh ibn Riab: (d. 625) He was Muhammad's cousin on his mother's side, Umayma bint Abd al-Muttalib. Abd Allah ibn Jahsh gave his allegiance to Muhammad. He was the brother of Zaynab bint Jahsh.

Abu Ahmad ibn Jahsh ibn Riab: He was Muhammad's cousin on his mother's side, Umayma bint Abd al-Muttalib. Abu Ahmad ibn Jahsh gave his allegiance to Muhammad. He was the brother of Zaynab bint Jahsh.

Ubayd Allah ibn Jahsh: He was Muhammad's cousin through his mother, Umayma bint Abd al-Muttalib. He was from the Dudan clan of the Quraysh. The clan was a confederate of Harb and Abu Sufyan. Abd Allah, brother of Ubayd Allah. Abu Ahmad, brother of Ubayd Allah. He was married to Ramlah bint Abu Sufyan (Umm Habiba). Ubayd Allah ibn Jahsh and his entire clan bore witness to the truth of Muhammad and his message.

The wife of Musab ibn Umayr: Her husband was a great grandson of Hashim. She was a sister of Ubayd Allah ibn Jahsh.

Fatima, the wife of Said: She was a cousin of the same family and her brother Zayd ibn Khattab. Zayd ibn Khattab was the older brother of Umar.

Waqidi, a confederate of the Khattab family

Amir ibn Rabia, the freed man and adopted son of Umar ibn Khattab's father, Khattab.

Umayyah sub-clan of Abd Shams

Ramlah bint Abu Sufyan or Umm Habiba (b. 589/d.666 CE):

She was the daughter of Safiyyah bint Abi al-As and Abu Sufyan ibn Harb, the leader of Quraysh and the most powerful opponent of Muhammad for most of his life. She bore witness early and immigrated with her husband, Ubayd Allah ibn Jahsh to Abyssinia. Muhammad is later to marry her when her husband dies so she becomes an Umm al-Muminin. Ramlah was related to Uthman ibn Affan. They were first cousins on their mother's side and second cousins on her father's side. Her first husband, Ubayd Allah ibn Jahsh, was among the first people to bear witness. Ubayd Allah ibn Jahsh was the brother of Zaynab bint Jahsh.[21]

Uthman ibn Affan[22]

Khalid ibn Said ibn al-As ibn Umayyah

Amr ibn Said

THE ADIYY CLAN CONVERTS

Urwah ibn Abi Uthathah: Full brother of Amr ibn al-As.[23]

Adiyy ibn Nadlah[24]

Mamar ibn Abd Allah ibn Nadlah[25]

Numan ibn Adiyy ibn Nadlah[26]

Zayd ibn al-Khattab: Brother of Umar.[27]

Saied ibn Zayd ibn Amr ibn Nufayl (b. 593-4/d. 673): He was not yet twenty years old when he bore witness to the truth of Muhammad's message becoming one of the early Muslims. Said ibn Zayd was the son of Zayd bin Amr. Khattab bin Nufayl, the father of Said's wife and of Umar al-Khattab, he was Said's father-in-law. Before the Quranic message, Said's father, Zayd ibn Amr, had been a monotheist (*hanif*), and, therefore, never worshiped idols nor ate meat that had been slaughtered in the name of the idols. He was constantly harassed by the Quraysh. His uncle, Khattab bin Nufayl, was his main persecutor. Said ibn Zayd ibn Amr ibn Nufayl was a great man and is also the one of the best role models of the Quranic message. Said eventually married Fatima bint al-Khattab. Both of them became Muslims and hid their faith from Fatima's brother, Umar. Early on Saied would write down the signs of the Quran that were revealed. He was a pious man and followed the teachings of Muhammad throughout his life.

Fatima bint al-Khattab ibn Nufayl: Ibn Sad states that she became Muslim before her brother, Umar, did and gave her allegiance to the Messenger before he went to the house of Arqam.

Layla bint Hathma ibn Hudhayfa: According to Ibn Sad, she was a slave who gave birth to the child of her master. She was or became the wife of Amir ibn Rabiah, an ally of Khattab ibn Nufayl.

Amir ibn Rabiah: Amir was a freed man, the adopted son of Umar's father, Khattab.

Nuaym ibn Abd Allah al-Nahham

Adiyy or Makhzum Clan Confederate Slave

Waqid ibn Abd Allah

Abu Salmah of the Makhzum Clan.[28]

THE AL-MUTTALIB CLAN CONVERTS

Ubaydah ibn al-Harith ibn al-Muttalib: He was the son of Muhammad's uncle and ten years older than Muhammad.[29]

AL-MUTTALIB CLAN CONFEDERATE

Urwa bint Abd al-Muttalib, daughter of Abd al-Muttalib and sister of Hamza ibn Abd al-Muttalib.[30]

THE AMIR IBN LUAYY CLAN CONVERTS

Abd Allah ibn Suhayl ibn Amr: Brother of Umm Kulthum bint Suhayl ibn Amr and Abu Jandal.[31]

Abu Jandal ibn Suhayl ibn Amr: Brother of Umm Kulthum bint Suhayl ibn Amr and Abu Jandal.[32]

Abu Sabrah ibn Abi Ruhm: Son of paternal aunt of Muhammad, Barrah bint Abd al-Muttalib.[33]

Amrah bint al-Sadi: Wife of Malik ibn Zamah.[34]

Malik ibn Zamah: Sawdah bint Zamah's brother. Wife was Amrah bint al-Sadi.[35]

Sakran ibn Amr: Brother of Suhayl ibn Amr and Hatib ibn Amr and first husband of Sawdah bint Zamah.[36]

Sawdah bint Zamah[37]

Umm Kulthum bint Suhayl ibn Amr: She was the wife of son of Muhammad's paternal aunt and daughter of prominent the Quraysh noble and chief Suhayl ibn Amr.[38]

Yaqazah bint Alqamah: Wife of Salit ibn Amr, brother of Suhayl ibn Amr.[39]

Abd Allah ibn Suhayl ibn Amr: Brother of Umm Kulthum bint Suhayl ibn Amr and Abu Jandal.[40]

Abu Jandal ibn Suhayl ibn Amr: Brother of Umm Kulthum bint Suhayl ibn Amr and Abu Jandal.[41]

Ibn Umm Maktum (Amr ibn Umm Maktum): Abd Allah Ibn Umm Maktum was the son of Qays Ibn Sayd and Aatikah Bint Abd Allah. He was blind from birth and so his mother was called Umm Maktum (mother of the concealed one). Ibn Umm Maktum was a maternal cousin of Khadijah bint Khuwaylid. Abd Allah Ibn Umm Maktum was among the first converts who bore witness. Muhammad was later to send he and Musab ibn Umayr to Madinah to teach the Quran to the people before the Hijra took place. He and Bilal Ibn Rabah were chosen as muezzins in Madinah by Muhammad. When Muhammad would later leave Madinah to participate in battles, Umm Maktum was given the responsibility of leading the prayers.[42]

Hatib ibn Amr ibn Abd Shams[43]

Salit ibn Amr Ala ibn Hadrami

THE ASAD CLAN CONVERTS

Fatima bint Asad: Fatima, the wife of Abu Talib and mother of Aqil, Jafar and Ali ibn Abi Talib, being one of the first to swear allegiance to Muhammad and the concept of the Oneness of God, bore witness when Muhammad first began teaching. Ibn Saad says: The Prophet had grown up in her home. He had lived with she and her family from the age of eight until he married Khadija when he was twenty-five. She was the daughter of the uncle of Zayda ibn al-Asamm, the grandfather of Khadija on her mother's side. Muhammad often spent midday resting in her home. He loved her very much as she was the only mother he really knew. Fatima bint Asad was very close to Muhammad both in worldly and spiritual relations. He remembered in his later life that she would go hungry to feed him. He respected her so highly that whenever she visited him he would stand up and receive her with great love, addressing her as mother.[44]

Zubayr ibn al-Awwan[45]

THE ASAD IBN ABD AL-UZZA CLAN CONVERTS

Amr ibn Umayyah ibn al-Harith ibn Asad ibn Abd al-Uzza[46]

Aswad ibn Nawfal ibn Khuwaylid ibn Asad: Khadija's nephew and Waraqa ibn Nawfal ibn Asad's cousin (paternal uncle). His father, Nawfal ibn Khuwaylid, persecuted Muhammad's followers.[47]

Khalid ibn Hizam: Khadija's nephew and Hakim ibn Hizam's brother.[35] According to one report, 4:100 was revealed about him.

Yazid ibn Zamah ibn al-Aswad[48]

THE FIHR IBN MALIK CLAN CONVERTS

Amr ibn al-Harith ibn Zuhayr[49]

Sad ibn Abd Qays[50]

Suhayl ibn Bayda[51]

Uthman ibn Abd Ghanm ibn Zuhayr: Son of paternal aunt of Abdul Rahman ibn Awf.[52]

Iyad ibn Abi Zuhayr

Lubaba bint al-Harith (Umm Fadl): Umm al-Fadl claimed to be the second woman to bear witness, the same day as her close friend, Khadijah bint Khuwaylid, the first wife of Muhammad. Umm al-Fadl's traditions of the Prophet appear in all canonical collections of hadith.

Abu Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah: By 611 CE, Muhammad was preaching the Oneness of God to the people of Makkah. He began by inviting his closest companions and relatives in secret to the way of the truth. Abu Ubaydah gave his allegiance to Muhammad just a day after Abu Bakr in the year 611 CE. Abu Ubayda ibn al-Jarrah.[53]

Rabiah ibn al-Harith ibn Abd al-Muttalib
Abd Allah ibn al-Harith ibn Abd al-Muttalib

THE HASHIM CLAN CONTINUE TO CONVERT

Members of the Prophet's household listed below had converted in Year 1and are listed in *Book Year 1*. They are listed here to give more information about each one.

Zaynab bint Muhammad: Ibn Sad states: She was the oldest daughter of Muhammad said to have been born in 597 CE when the Prophet was twenty-seven years old. She accepts the Quranic message when her mother does. The Prophet married her to his cousin, Abul As ibn al-Rabi, before the revelation began. His mother was Halah bint Khuwaylid, Zaynab's maternal aunt. She was living with her husband at the time of the revelation who did not give his allegiance to Muhammad until much later.[54]

Ruqiyyah bint Muhammad: Ruqayya, said to be born three years after her sister, Zaynab, in 600 CE. She accepts the Quranic message when her mother does.[55]

Umm Khulthum bint Muhammad: Umm Khulthum is born a year after her sister, Ruqayya. She accepts the Quranic message when her mother does.[56]

Fatima bint Muhammad: The youngest daughter of the Messenger of God, Fatima is born some say five years before the Messenger began his mission and some say five years after the mission began. Whichever one it is, it has been recorded that her early years are spent bearing the suffering and difficulties of her father with a very special sympathy. She accepts the Quranic message at the same time as her mother and sisters.[57]

Ali ibn Abi Talib: Ali is born in 599 CE. When he is six years old in 605 CE, he moves to the home of Muhammad and Khadija where he grows up. He is placed in the care of Muhammad and Khadija because a of a famine in Makkah. Shortly after the rebuilding of the Kabah, Muhammad comforts himself for the loss of his infant son Qasim by adopting Ali, his first cousin, the child of his uncle, Abu Talib. As it happened, there was a season of severe scarcity in Makkah and Abu Talib, still poor, was put to shifts for the support of his numerous family. His difficulties were perceived by Muhammad, who, prompted by his usual kindness and consideration, repaired to his rich uncle Abbas, and said: O Abbas! Your brother, Abu Talib, has a burdensome family, and you see what straits men are brought to. Let us go to him and relieve him somewhat of the care of his children. I will take one son, if you will take another. And we shall support them. Abbas consenting, they proposed the thing to Abu Talib. He replied: Leave me Akil and Talib and do you with the

others as it pleases you. So Muhammad took Ali, and Abbas took Jafar. Ali remained ever after with Muhammad.[58]

Aqil ibn Abi Talib (b. 590 CE): Aqil was the second son of Muhammad's uncle, Abu Talib.

Jafar ibn Abi Talib: He was married to Asma bint Umays ibn Numan ibn Kab ibn Malik ibn Quhafa.

Safiyyah bint Abd al-Muttalib: Ibn Sad states: She was the paternal aunt of Muhammad. She was the wife of Harith ibn Harb ibn Umayyah, and, later, the wife of Awwam ibn Khuwaylid.

Asma bint Umays ibn Numan ibn Kab ibn Malik: She was married to Jafar ibn Abi Talib. Ibn Sad: She was a beautiful Muslim woman.

Hashim Confederate

Abu Marthad al-Ghanawi

Marthad ibn Abi Marthad

Hashim Freed

Abu Kabshah

Salih Suqran Habashi

THE JUMAH CLAN CONVERTS

Jabir ibn Sufyan (Jabir ibn Hasanah al-Kindi).[59]

Junadah ibn Sufyan (Junadah ibn Hasanah al-Kindi).[60]

Nubayh ibn Uthman ibn Rabiah ibn Wahb.[61]

Sufyan ibn Mamar ibn Habib. He was married to Hasanah (Umm Shurahbil).[62]

Abd Allah ibn Mazun ibn Habib ibn Wahb: Abd Allah ibn Mazun is the brother of Uthman ibn Mazun.

Fatima bint al-Mujallil ibn Abdullah ibn Abu Qays (Umm Jamil bint al-Mujallil): Ibn Sad states: She married Hatib ibn al-Harith.

Hatib ibn al-Harith ibn Mamar ibn Habib: His wife was

Fatima bint al-Mujallil (Umm Jamil): Wife of Hatib ibn al-Harith ibn Mamar ibn Habib

Hattab ibn al-Harith ibn Mamar ibn Habib: His wife was Fukayha bint Yasar, the sister of Baraka. Abu Fukayha's (Yasar) daughter, Fukayha, was married to Hattab, a convert, who migrated to Abyssinia.[63]

Fukayha bint Yasar, sister of Baraka

Mamar ibn al-Harith ibn Mamar ibn Habib

Qudama ibn Mazun ibn Habib ibn Wahb: Qudama ibn Mazun was another brother of Uthman ibn Mazun.

Saib ibn Uthman ibn Mazun

Uthman ibn Mazun ibn Habib ibn Wahb: Both he and his wife, Khawlah bint Hakim, were among the early companions who

gave their allegiance to Muhammad. Uthman ibn Mazun of the Jumah tribe had to be persuaded by Muhammad to abandon his ascetic life.[64]

The Jumah ibn Amr Clan Converts

Jabir ibn Sufyan (Jabir ibn Hasanah al-Kindi)

Junadah ibn Sufyan (Junadah ibn Hasanah al-Kindi)

Hasanah (Umm Shurahbil)

Shurahbil ibn Hasanah al-Kindi

Sufyan ibn Mamar ibn Habib

Nubayh ib Uthman ibn Rabiah ibn Wahb

The Makhzum ibn Yaqaza Clan Converts

Abdullah ibn Sufyan ibn Abd al-Asad[65]

Habbar ibn Sufyan ibn Abd al-Asad[66]

Hisham (or Hashim) ibn Abu Hudhayfah ibn al-Mughirah[67]

Abu Salamah ibn Hisham ibn al-Mughirah: Brother of Abu Jahl; paternal cousin of Khalid ibn al-Walid. On return from Abyssinia relatives tortured him, imprisoned him and prevented him from his migration to Madinah.[68]

Ayyash ibn Abu Rabiah ibn al-Mughira

Asma bint Salamah wife of Ayyash ibn Abi Rabiah

Salamah ibn Hisham ibn al-Mughirah: Brother of Abu Jahl. Paternal cousin of Khalid ibn al-Walid.[69]

Abu Salama ibn Abd al-Asad ibn Hilal: He was married to Umm Salama Hind bint Abi Umayyah.

Umm Salama Hind bint Abi Umayyah ibn al-Mughirah: She was married to Abu Salama ibn Abd al-Asad ibn Hilal and along with her husband gave their allegiance to Muhammad.

Arqam ibn Abd Manaf ibn Asad: Ibn Saad says that he is one of the early Muslims.

The Sahm ibn Amr Clan Converts

Abd Allah ibn al-Harith ibn Qays ibn Adiyy: Brother of Abu Qays, Hajjaj and Saib.[70]

Abd Allah ibn Hudhayfah ibn Qays ibn Adiyy: Brother of Abu Qays, Hajjaj and Saib.[71]

Abu Qays ibn al-Harith ibn Qays ibn Adiyy: Brother of Abd Allah ibn al-Harith, Hajjaj, Saib).[72]

Bishr ibn al-Harith ibn Qays ibn Adiyy[73]

Hajjaj ibn al-Harith ibn Qays ibn Adiyy: Brother of Abu Qays, Abd Allah, Hajjaj.[74]

Hisham ibn al-As ibn Wail: Younger brother of Amr ibn al-As.[75]

Qays ibn Hudhayfah: Brother of Abd Allah ibn Hudhayfah ibn Qays Younger brother of Amr ibn al-As.[76]

Said ibn al-Harith ibn Qays ibn Adiyy: Brother of Abu Qays, Abd Allah, Hajjaj.[77]

Khunays ibn Hudhayfah ibn Qays ibn Adiyy: (3 AH/625-6 CE) He was married to Hafsa, the daughter of Umar ibn al-Khattab.[78]

Sahm Clan Confederate

Mahmiyyah ibn Jazu: Full brother of Umm al-Fadl, wife of Abbas ibn Abd al-Muttalib.[79]

Umayr ibn Riab[80]

Ramlah bint Abi Awf: Wife of al-Muttalib ibn Azhar and of the Bani Sahm.

Mabad ibn al-Harith (or Mamar)

The Taym Clan Converts

Abu Bakr[81]

Umm Ruman bint Amir ibn Umaymir: (d. 6AH/628 CE) She was the wife of Abu Bakr and mother of Asma bint Abu Bakr and Ayisha bint Abu Bakr. She bore witness early on.

al-Harith ibn Khalid ibn Sakhr ibn Amir: He bore witness early and migrated to Abyssinia with his wife.

Talhah ibn Ubayd Allah[82]

The Zuhrah Clan Converts

Abd Allah ibn Shihab: Maternal grandfather of Imam al-Zuhri.

Abd al-Rahman ibn Awf

Saad ibn Abi Waqqas[83]

Umayr ibn Abi Waqqas

al-Muttalib ibn Azhar: A cousin of Abd al-Rahman ibn Awf.

The Zuhrah Clan Confederate Converts

Miqdad ibn Amr al-Kindi[84]

Shurahbil ibn Hasanah al-Kindi[85]

Masud ibn Rabi ibn al-Qari

al-Muttalib ibn Azhar ibn Abd Awf

Amir ibn Abi Waqqas

Tulayb ibn Azhar

Umayr ibn Abi Waqqas

Utbah ibn Masud

The Zuhrah Clan Confederate or Taym Confederate Convert

Umm Ubays[86]

The Quraysh: Clan Unknown Converts

Amina (wife of Khalid)

Ramlah bint Abu Auf ibn Subayra: She was the wife of Muttalib ibn Azhar. She gave her allegiance to Muhammad before he moved to the House of Arqam.[87]

Fatima bint al-Mujallil (Umm Habib bint al-As): She was the

wife of Hatib ibn al-Harith. She was also called Umm Jamil bint al-Mujallil.[88]

Fukayha bint Yasar: Ibn Sad states: She was the sister of Baraka and wife of Hattab ibn al-Harith.[89]

Humayna bint Khalaf ibn Asad: An early convert, she was married to Khalif ibn Said ibn al-As.[90]

Umm Khulthum bint Uqba ibn Abi Muayt: Ibn Sad states: She was the sister of Uthman ibn Affan. She married Zayd ibn Harith al-Kalbi; Zubayr ibn al-Awwam; Abd al-Rahman ibn Awf; and Amr ibn al-As.

THE NON-QURAYSH CONVERTS

Masud ibn al-Rabi

Utbah ibn Masud

Hun tribe ibn Khuzaymah

Masud ibn Rabiah ibn Amr: He was the son of Rabiah ibn Amr ibn Sad.[91]

Rabiah ibn Amr: Father of Masud ibn Rabiah ibn Amr.

Khazraj

Hasanah (Umm Shurahbil)[92]

Muammil tribe

Mihjan ibn al-Adra al-Aslami[93]

Khazraj Tribe Malik ibn al-Najjar Clan

Tamima bint Wahb

Khuzaah Tribe

Humayna bint Khalaf ibn Asad

Umayman bint Khalaf, wife of Khalid ibn Said ibn al-As ibn Umayyah

Kinanah Tribe Ghiffar Clan

Abu Dharr Ghiffari (d. 652 CE): An ascetic and monotheist, he gave his allegiance to Muhammad.

Umm Dharr Ghiffari: She was married to Abu Dharr and early on gave her allegiance to Muhammad.

Sulaym Tribe

Khawla bint Hakim ibn Umayyah: Ibn Saad states: She was the wife of Uthman ibn Mazun ibn Habib ibn Wahb.

Tamim Tribe

Asma bint Salama: She was the wife of Ayyash ibn Abu Rabiah. Ibn Sad states that she gave her allegiance to Muhammad early in Makkah.

Khalil ibn al-Harith ibn Tamim, Zuhrah Ally

Among the List of POW/Slaves Are: The Makhzum Clan Confederate Converts

Abdullah ibn Yasir: Another son of Yasir who died under torture.[94]

Ammar ibn Yasir: Born in 570 CE, the Year of the Elephant, he was a friend of Muhammad's before the revelation. He was an intermediary in Muhammad's marriage to Khadijah.

Sumayyah: Wife of Yasir, she died under the torture of Abu Jahl and is the first martyr among Muhammad's followers.

Yasir: Father of Ammar ibn Yasir and confederate of Abu Hudhayfah ibn al-Mughirah.[95]

Among the List of POW/Slaves Are The Jumah Clan Confederate Convert

Bilal: He was the prisoner-of-war of Umayyah ibn Khalaf. He was severely tortured as he publicly announced his allegiance to Muhammad. Others who did this and were tortured include Shuayb, Ammar, Khabbab and Sumayyah.[96] Among the slaves freed by Abu Bakr after suffering severe persecution for their accepting Muhammad's message as the truth, was Bilal, a confederate of the Jumah Clan, the son of an Abyssinian slave girl. Muhammad honored and distinguished him as the first fruits of Abyssinia.[97]

Hamamah: She was the mother of Bilal.[98]

Among the List of POW/Slaves Are: The Taym Clan Confederate Converts

Suhayb ibn Sinan al-Rumi (b. c. 582 CE): Also known as Suhayb al-Rumi, was a former prisoner-of-war in the Byzantine Empire who became an early member of the early community. He was born in the same village as that of Prophet Solomon. At the age of seven he was on a ship in the Mediterranean when the Romans raided the ship and took him as a prisoner to Rome. He lived there for eighteen years before he met some Arab sailors who helped him to escape to Arabia. Suhayb ibn Sinan was an important Greek convert. His family said that he fled from Constantinople to Makkah and voluntarily placed himself under the guardianship of Abd Allah.[93] He was to gain a considerable amount of wealth while in Makkah. After he bore witness, Abd Allah died and he was without a patron. He was persecuted by the Quraysh. Perhaps 16:103 and 44:4 and 25:4 were revealed about him.

Amir ibn Fukayra: Amir ibn Fukayra (son by a former owner of Umm Ruman, Abu Bakr's wife and mother of Ayisha), after being released from severe trial, was employed by Abu Bakr in tending his flocks.[99]

Among the List of POW/Slaves Are: The Zuhrah Clan Confederate Convert

Abd Allah ibn Masud: He was part of the early community and remained one of the closest companions to Muhammad throughout his life. As a young shepherd, he had worked for Uqba ibn Abu Muayt. Abd Allah Ibn Masud was from the Hothail tribe, an Adnaite tribe in western Arabia. Hothail had been the grandson of Elijah (Ilyas) and was also the sworn ally of Zuhrah clan. Abd Allah ibn Masud from the Tamim clan.

Nicknamed Ibn Umm al-Abd ('son of the mother of a slave') and best known in history as Ibn Masud, he began his youth as a shepherd, tending the herd of Uqba ibn Muayt. He spent his time in the hills around Makkah far from the city and its idolatrous influence. One evening when he returned to Makkah with his flock, he heard the news of a Messenger who had come and who talked of the One God. It had no special impact on him as he was out of the city from early dawn until nightfall tending to the flocks.

Then one day as he was tending Uqba's flock, he saw two people approaching him from a distance who appeared to be in a hurry. He was surprised to find anyone in this wilderness and two people in a hurry, at that. Who could they be? What could they want? As they came close, he saw that they were tired and thirsty. They greeted him and asked him to milk one of the animals so that they might have something to drink to quench their thirst. Their lips were parched and they spoke with difficulty.

Ibn Masud, the young shepherd, replied to the two men, Muhammad and Abu Bakr, although he knew not who they were: I cannot do that because I do not own these sheep. I am only their caretaker.

The two men seeking the retreat of the mountains for a day away from the idol worshipping Quraysh were pleased with his response, so pleased that they did not pursue it although they were thirsty. Ibn Masud was impressed by the fact that they did not insist although he could see their great need. It was not long after that that he bore witness.

He was the first Companion to recite the Quran publically.

Among the List of POW/Slaves Are: The Non-Quraysh Convert

Khabbab ibn al-Aratt (d. 37 or 39 AH): Khabbab, a blacksmith, also converted at this period. The slaves of Makkah were peculiarly accessible to the solicitations of the Prophet. Khabbab was from the Najd.

Khabbab is recorded as one of the "weak ones" in Makkah.

Lacking any protection, he was exposed to persecution and cruel torture. The Quraysh and leaders of tribes used to mock [Muhammad] when they saw him in the company of Khabbab and other poor men. It is said that Khabbab was attached to Muhammad and heard some chapters of the Quran from his mouth.[100]

Khabbab, an Arab sold into slavery as a result of a raid against his clan of the Tamim tribe, was among the early companions of God's Messenger. He suffered great torture at the hands of his owner, Umm Anmar. A blacksmith by trade, Khabbab had seen Muhammad being insulted, conspired against, threatened, and ridiculed in an attempt by the aristocratic, ungrateful Quraysh to try to silence him, make him 'not speak,' and yet he spoke.

Khabbab was among those who suffered torture in order to preserve their faith in God. His master, Umm Anmar (or Umm Siba), taught him to be a blacksmith in order to make use of his talents. Before the call to prophethood, Muhammad used to sit in front of Khabbab's workshop as he had grown very fond of him. Khabbab then bore witness once the invitation was given to him by Muhammad. When Umm Anmar heard of his bearing witness, she took a hot iron and branded him on his head. Khabbab complained of her actions to Muhammad. Muhammad prayed for him, saying: Oh Lord, help Khabbab. Umm Anmar developed a very painful illness from which she died.

It is related that when Khabbab claimed a debt from al-As ibn Wail, al-As ibn Wail, who denied the resurrection, said that he would pay back what he owed to Khabbab on the Day of Judgment.

And they said: What is the matter with us that we see not men whom we had been numbering among the worst? (38:62) *Took We them to ourselves as a laughing-stock or swerved our sight from them? Truly, this is true of the disagreement of the people of the fire.* Such men were the poor among the Muslims, like Ammar ibn Yasir, Bilal al-Habashi, Suhayb al-Rumi and Salman al-Farsi. (38:62-38:64)[97]

Assuredly that is true: such a scene will necessarily take place, which is, the wrangling of the inhabitants of the Fire. (38:64)

AMONG THE LIST OF POW/SLAVES ARE: THE NON-QURAYSH CONVERTS

Al-Nahdiah (Nadia, an-Nahdiyah or al-Nahdiah) was a convert. She had a daughter named **Umm Ubays**, and both of them were the slaves of a woman of Abd al-Dar Clan.98 When Nahdiah and her daughter became Muslims, they were both tortured because they refused to refute their belief. Among those who tortured them were her mistress and Umar, before he also became a Muslim. Abu Bakr, an

early Muslim, complained to their mistress about the treatment, whereupon she answered: You have corrupted them. You may free them if you are so sympathetic to them. Abu Bakr paid the price asked for, and liberated the women.[101]

Abu Fukayha: He was a slave of the Abd al-Dar.[100] Abu Fukayha was also known as Yasar. He is frequently mentioned as one of the converts who suffered most severely in the early persecutions.[102]

Zannirah al-Rumiyyah: A confederate slave of either the Adiyy or Makhzum Clan, she was persecuted.[103]

Lubaynah or Lubaybah: A slave of the Muammil tribe, she was persecuted by Umar.[104s]

Other Freed POW/Slaves Who Converted

Umm Ayman Barakah bint Thalabah: One of the earliest converts, a member of the Prophet's household, she was freed by Muhammad.

Zayd ibn Haritha: One of the earliest converts, a member of the Prophet's household, he was freed by Muhammad and later adopted as his son.

Umm Ubays: Slave maid to the Zuhrah or Taym Clan

Mihjan ibn al-Adra al-Aslami

Masud ibn Rabiah ibn Amr: A member of the al-Hun Khuzaymah Tribe.

APPENDIX 2: CORRELATION BETWEEN THE PRESENT ORDER OF CHAPTERS IN THE QURAN AND THEIR CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

1 = 96
2 = 68
3 = 73
4 = 74
5 = 1
6 = 111
7 = 81
8 = 87
9 = 92
10 = 89
11 = 93
12 = 94
13 = 103
14 = 100
15 = 108
16 = 102
17 = 107
18 = 109
19 = 105
20 = 113
21 = 114
22 = 112
23 = 53
24 = 80
25 = 97
26 = 91
27 = 85
28 =95
29 = 106
30 = 101
31 = 75
32 = 104
33 = 77
34 = 50
35 = 90
36 = 86
37 = 54
38 = 38
39 = 7
40 = 72
41 = 36
42 = 25
43 = 35
44 = 19
45 = 20
46 = 56
47 = 26
48 = 27
49 = 28
50 = 17
51 = 10
52 = 11
53 = 12
54 = 15
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79 = 70
80 = 78
81 = 79
82 = 82
83 = 84
84 = 30
85 = 29
86 = 83
87 = 2
88 = 8
89 = 3
90 = 33
91 = 60
92 = 4
93 = 99
94 = 57
95 = 47
96 = 13
97 = 55
98 = 76
99 = 65
100 = 78
101 = 59
102 = 24
103 = 22
104 = 63
105 = 58
106 = 49
107 = 66
108 = 64
109 = 61
110 = 62
111 = 48
112 = 5
113 = 9
114 = 110

NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION TO QURANIC THINKING BY HASHIM KAMALI

1. The rough equation that earlier Muslim scholars drew between the Islamic and Western conceptions of reason tended to be oblivious of the categories of reason and the Western critique of reason that divided it into "instrumental reason, critical reason, functional reason, abstract reason, imperialist reason, decentering reason" and the like. For details see Abdelwahab M. Elmessiri, "Features of the New Islamic Discourse," a Cairo conference paper, 1997: http:// www.2lstcenturytrust.org/messiri.doc.

2. Some commentators have distinguished a total of 30 expressions that revolve around thinking over the *ayat*. See Abu Bakr al-Razi, *Tafsir al-Kabir* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1985), II, 222f.

3. Cf Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-'Ilm fi'l-Quran al-Karim* (Cairo: Maktaba Wahba, 1416/1996), 36.

4. Al-Isfahani, *Mufradat Alfaz al-Qur'an*, under "*Fikr*".

5. Cf., Karim Douglas Crow, "Islam and Reason" in *Al-Shajarah*, vol. 8, (2003),120-1.

6. Abbas Mahmud, "al-Agqad, Al-Tafkir Faridah Islamiyyah" (Thinking is an Islamic Obligation) quoted in Jamal Badi and Mustapha Tajdin, *Creative Thinking: An Islamic Perspective*, 2nd edn. (Kuala Lumpur: International Islamic University Malaysia, 2005), 6.

7. Cf. al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-'Ilm*, 41-45 quoting ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's *Miftah Dar al-Sa'ada*, and 'Agqad's book entitled *al-Tafkir Faridah Islamiyya* (Beirut: al-Matba'a al-'Asriyya, 1992).

8. Cf. al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-Ilm*, 200.

9. Cf .Ibid., 202.

10. Al-Raghib al-Isfahani, *Mufradat Alfaz al-Quran* (Beirut: Dar al-Shamiyya, 1383/1964), 249.

11. Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i, *al-Mizan fi-Tafsir al-Quran* (Beirut: al-Mu'assasa al-'Alami, 1383/1964) II, 395.

12. Ala uddin al-Mattagi al-Hindi, *Kanz al-Ummah fi Sunan al-Aqwal wa'l-Af'al* (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risalah, 1383/1981), hadith no. 5873.

13. Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali, *Risalat al-Radd 'ala al-Laduniyya*, ed. 'Abd Allah Riyad Mustafa, (Damascus: Dar al-Hikma, 1986), 241.

14. CE Ahmad Fu'ad al-Ahwani, *al-Tarbiyah fi'l-Islam* (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif bi-Misr, 1968), 227-228.

15. Cf. Aziz al-Azmeh, *Arabic Thought and Islamic Societies* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 109.

16. Cf. Diane F. Halpern, *Thought and Knowledge: An Introduction to Critical Thinking* (Mahwah: New Jersey, Lawrence Erlbaum and Associates, 1996), 21.

17. Cf. Ibrahim B. Syed, "Critical Thinking" as online at http://www.lrfi. org/articles/articles_101_150/critical_thinking.htm.

(18. Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Lahore: Shah Muhammad Ashraf, reprint 1982), 127.

19. Malik Bin Nabi, *Intaj al-Mustashriqin* (Cairo: Maktabah 'Amir, 1990), 34.

20. Iqbal, op. cit., 139.

21. See for details Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, *What's Right with Islam is What's*

Right with America (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2004), 4-5.

22. Georg W. H. Hegel, *Philosophy of History* (New York: Dove Books, 1956), 109.

23. Louay Safi, "The Creative Mission of the Muslim Minorities in the West: Synthesizing the Ethos of Islam and modernity," a conference paper presented at Westminster University, London, England February 21, 2004: http://insight.org/articles/Current/MuslimMinorities.htm.

24. Cf., M.H. Kamali, "Islam, Rationality and Science," in Islam and Science, vol. 1, no. 2 (2003), 126f, see also Mehdi Golshani, "Philosophy of Science from the Qur'anic Perspective," in *Towards Islamisation of Disciplines* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1989), 73f.

25. Cf. Ishfaq Ahmad, "Research and Development Culture in the Islamic World: Past and Present Problems and Future Directions," in Abu Bakr Abdul Majeed et al. (eds.) *New Knowledge, Research and Development in the Muslim World* (Kuala Lumpur: Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia, 2004), 14-15.

26. See for a discussion Oliver Leaman, "Institutionalising Research and Development Culture in the Islamic and Non-Islamic World: A Comparative Perspective," in Abu Bakr Majeed, (ed.) *New Knowledge*, 50-51.

27. Malik bin Nabi, *Intaj al-Mustashriqin*, 26.

28. See for details Mohammad Hashim Kamali, "Issues in the Understanding of Jihad and Ijtihad" in *Islamic Studies* 41 (2002), 623 ff.

29. There is a chapter on *ijtihad* in M. H. Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1991, 3rd edn. 2003). See also my article "Issues in the Understanding of Jihad and Ijtihad" in *Islamic Studies*, 41 (2002), 617-635; and "Issues in the Legal Theory and Usul and Prospects for Reform" in *Islamic Studies*, 40 (2001), 1-21.

30. Sergio Moravia. *The Enigma of the Mind: The Mind-Body Problem in Contemporary Thought*, tr. S. Staton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. First published in Rome, 1986), 4-5.

31. See for example, Howard Gardner, *Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligence for the 21st Century* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

32. See for details Roger Garudy, "The Balance Sheet of Western Philosophy in this Century" in *Towards Islamisation of Disciplines* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1989), 399f.

33. Mehdi Golshani, "From Knowledge to Wisdom: A Qur'anic Perspective," in *Islamic Studies*, 44 (2005), 13.

34. Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Fiqh al-Awlawiyyat*, 68.

35. Cf., Al-Ahwani, *al-Tarbiyah fi'l-Islam*, 189.

36. Mohammad Hashim Kamali is Professor of Islamic Law and jurisprudence at the International Islamic University Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur. "Reading the Signs," Center for Islam and Science. Gale Group, 2006.

NOTES TO THE TEXT AND APPENDIX 1

1. Ibn Abbas: His real name is Abdullah Ibn Shurayh. Umm Maktum was his father's mother.

2. See Preface.

3. Commentator.

4. Muhammad ibn Abd al-Rahman al-Musahifi informed us that > Abu Amr Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Hamdan> Abu Yala> ibn Yahya ibn Said> his father> Hisham ibn Urwah> Ayisha said.

5. See Appendix 1: Lesson 31(2)

6. Ali Shariat, *Fatima is Fatima*, p. 82.

7. See Appendix 1: Lesson 32

8. See Appendix 1: Lesson 33(1)

9. See Appendix 1: Lesson (34(2)

10. B. A. Dar, "Ethical Teachings of the Quran," http://www.al-islam.org/history-muslim-philosophy-volume-1-book-2/chapter-8-ethical-teachings-quran.

11. Osman Bakar, "Reflections on Islamic Environmentalism," http://www.cilecenter.org/en/videos/dr-osman-bakar-reflections-on-islamic-environmentalism/

12. See Appendix 1: Lesson 36

13. See Appendix 1: Lesson 37(1)

14. See Appendix 1: Lesson 37(2)

15. See Appendix 1: Lesson 38(2)

16. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba*, V, p 194.

17. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba*, V, p 177.

18. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba*, I, p 311-312.

19. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba*, III, p 65; *al-Isabah II, p 233, no. 4288.*

20. *Al-Isabah*, IV, pp 336-337, no. 595; *Kitab al-nisa.*

21. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* V, pp 573-574.

22. He converted in the Year 2. See *Book Year 2.*

23. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba*, III, pp 402-403.

24. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba*, III, p 398.

25. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba*, IV, p 400.

26. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba*, III, p 398.

27. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba*, II, pp 238-239.

28. *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p 225.

29. He converted in Year 2. See *Book Year 2.*

30. *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p 225.

31. *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p 202 1/2).

32. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* III, p 181.

33. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* V p 160.

34. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* V, p 207.

35. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* V, p 510.

36. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,*, IV, p 280.

37. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,*, II, pp 324-325.

38. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* V p 485.

39. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* V, p 613.

40. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* V p 485.

41. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba* III, p 181.
42. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba* V p 160.
43. *Al-Isabah*, II, pp 523-524, no 5764 and Wikipedia.
32. Hatib ibn Amr was from the Amr ibn Luayy tribe. *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p 260.
33. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* IV, p 85.
34. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* I pp 87-88.
35. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* II, p 78.
36. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* V, p 110.
37. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* IV, p 95).
38. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* II, p 312.
39. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* II, p 370.
40. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* III, p 375.
41. *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p 261.
42. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,*, I, p 253.
43. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,*, I, p 299. Hatib and Mumir are mentioned by Ibn Hisham as sons of Harith of the Jumah clan. Waqidi passings his genealogy to Mumir (p 259 ½) but makes Hatib and Hattab sons of the Amr clan of the Amir ibn Luaay. (p. 260.
44. She was one of the early converts.
45. He converted in the Year 2. See *Book Year 2.*
44. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,*, V, p 15.
45. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,*, II, pp 321-322.
46. *Al-Isabah*, II, p 319 no 4721.
47. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* V pp 54.
48. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* V pp 60-61
49. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* II, p 341.
50. *Usd al-ghabah*, II, p 341.
51. *al-Isabah*, II, p 292 no. 4605.
52. *al-Isabah*, II, p 292 no. 4605.
53. He converted in Year 2. *See Book Year 2.*
54. She converted when her mother, Khadijah, converted. See *Book Year 1.*
55. She converted when her mother, Khadijah, converted. See *Book Year 1.*
56. She converted when her mother, Khadijah, converted. See *Book Year 1.*
57. She converted when her mother, Khadijah, converted. See *Book Year 1* depending on when she was born.
58. He converted when her mother, Khadijah, converted. See *Book Year 1.*
59. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* V, pp 279-280.
60. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* I, pp 184-185.
61. *Al-Isabah*, II, p 311no. 1615.
62. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,*, V pp 63-64.
63. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,*, IV p 211.
64.. *Al-Isabah*, II, p 8-9 no. 3058 or II, p 44, no. 3251. He converted in Year 2. See *Book Year 2.*
65. *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p 257.
66. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,*, IV p 334.
67. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,*, IV p 143.

68. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* I, pp 335-336.
69. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba*, V, 583.
70. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* III, p 184.
71. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* IV, pp 409-411.
72. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* II, p 391.
73. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* V, p 601.
74. Ibn Sad, *Kitab al-tabiqat al-kubra*, VIII.
75. Ibn Sad, *Kitab al-tabiqat al-kubra*, VIII.
76. Ibn Sad, *Kitab al-tabiqat al-kubra*, VIII.
77. Ibn Sad, *Kitab al-tabiqat al-kubra*, VIII.
78. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* IV, p 357.
79. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* V, p 425.
80. *Sunan of Abu-Dawud* Hadith (Hadith 372). (*Al-Isabah*, III, pp 366-367, no. 7738.
81. He converted in Year 2. See *Book Year 2.*
82.. He converted in Year 2. See *Book Year 2.* Related by al-Bukharl and Muslim.
83. He converted in Year 2. See *Book Year 2.*Related by Ahmad, and also by al-Tabari and al-Bayhaqi with different chains of transmission.
84. Related by al-Bukhari and Muslim.
85. Related by Muslim and al-Tirmidhi.
86. Related by Ahmad, al-Bukhari and Muslim.
87. Abu Hakim Aqil ibn Muhammad al-Jurjani informed us (through verbal authorization)> Abul-Faraj al-Qadi> Muhammad ibn Jarir> al-Husayn ibn Abi Yahya al-Maqdisi> Yahya ibn Hammad> Abu Awanah> al-Mughirah> Abul-Duha> Masruq> Abdullah said.
88. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* V, p 98.
89. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,* V, p 98.
90. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba,*, I, pp 206-209.
91. *Kitab al-Waqidi,* p 224.
92. *Al-Isabah*, IV, p 1813, no 3301.
93. *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p 222.
94. *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p 223.
95. Kamali, *Reading the Signs*, p 21.
96. Ibn Hisham, *al-Sira al-nabawiyya*, Cairo 1355/1936, i, 271, 368-370, 383; ii 337; Ibn Sad, *Tabaqat*, Beirut 1377/1957, iii, 164-7; v 245; al-Waqidi, *al-Maghazi*, ed. M. Jones, London 1966, i, 100, 155.
97. Commentator
98. Ibn Hisham, pp 318-319.
99. SUNY Press, *History of al-Tabari* Vol. 39.
100. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba*, V, p 273.
101. Ibn Hisham, p 318; *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba*, V, 462.
102. *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p 223.
103. Ibn Hisham, 319.

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Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Year 4

Laleh Bakhtiar

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THE YEAR 4 OF THE REVELATION

MUHARRAM 1-DHU AL-HIJJA 30, 10 BH/ CA. NOVEMBER 1, 612 CE- OCTOBER 21, 613 CE

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PREFACE

THE CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STUDIES TEXTBOOK SERIES

There are thirty books in this series. Books entitled *Book Year 1* to *Book Year 24* consist of one book for each year of the revelation. The chapters' or sections' signs (*ayat*) are presented according to the 558 *ruku* or sections of the 114 chapters of the Quran. They each include the relevant chapter (*surah*) or chapters (when they are short) or sections, *ruku* (when there are multiple sections in a particular chapter) in chronological order. The chapters are numbered according to the chronological order of the Quranic chapters provided by al-Azhar University as the officially accepted order of revelation. Each section (*ruku*) is followed by a commentary by one of the well-known commentators.

Book Year 4 is from Muharram 1-Dhu al-Hijja 30, 10 BH/ ca. November 1, 612 CE-October 21, 613 CE.

Books 25-28 are devoted to the Quranic stories of all other Prophets and Messengers in order of their dates. *Book 25: Adam, Cain and Abel, Enoch (Idris), Noah, Hud and the People of Aad; Saleh and the People of Thamud; Book 26: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Jacob (Israel), Joseph and Job; Book 27: Moses, Aaron, Children of Jacob (Israel), Jethro (Shuayb), Joshua, Khidr and Samuel; Book 28: David, Solomon, Elijah (Ilyas), Elisha (Alyasa), Jonah (Younis), Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl), Ezra (Uzayr), Dhul Qarnayn (Cyrus the Great or Alexander the Great), Luqman, Zechariah, John the Baptist (Yahya), Mary and Jesus.* The last two are: *Book 29: The Life of Prophet Muhammad from Birth to the Revelation* and *Book 30: Teacher's Manual.* The last, *Book 30,* has been prepared for the teacher's Lesson Plans.

At the beginning of each lesson, there is an exercise in critical thinking skills. These consist of one of the following: **The Nine Intellectual Standards, The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** and **The Seven Moral Traits.** The Eight Elements contain thirty-five strategies. However there is no specific order as to how they should be learned and incorporated into our thinking process.

Once we understand the critical thinking skills and then apply them to the signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. Once the skills as presented in the Quranic message are put into practice with the grace of God, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behavior.

Each lesson is followed by questions for classroom discussion or for dialogue. At the end of each lesson there is an assessment/assignment for students to use while they are developing critical thinking skills as they hopefully

learn HOW the Quran teaches critical thinking.

SOURCES

The sources for the history include the works of Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hashim, Waqidi, Ibn Sad and commentaries by Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn, Tustari and Sayyid Qutb. The sources for the commentaries of Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn and Tustari have been used with the permission of the publisher, the Royal Institute of Ahl al-Bayt in Jordan. They are available on their website www.altafsir.com.

The inclusion of excerpted commentaries (tafsir) by Sayyid Qutb's In the Shade of the Quran (available online) in this Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series is because Sayyid Qutb is considered by some extremist groups as their intellectual source. By including excerpts from his eighteen volume Quranic commentary, extremists cannot disclaim the importance of learning critical thinking as this series is to help young adults learn HOW to think using self-realization (tahqiq) and critical thinking (furqan) skills taught by the Quran. This in order to arm young adults with the ability to choose reason over any irrational extremist ideology that is presented to them.

TERMINOLOGY

All Quranic signs are translations from The Sublime Quran. For the Muslim, the Quran is the Word (Logos) of God. It is this Word of God that has inspired artists, artisans, poets, philosophers and writers, those who had been the exponents of Islamic culture and civilization for almost 1500 years. Yesterday and today's Muslim wants to know more about each Word that God chose for His revelation through the Quran. This realization, in turn, prompted the translation of The Sublime Quran, an attempt to give the sense of unity within the revelation to a non-Arabic speaking reader.

There are several points to note about the terminology used in the translation of the Quranic text and the commentaries.

1. The blessed Prophet did not bring a new religion; he came to confirm what was right in the messages of the previous Prophets. Does this translation speak to the universality of the Quran? The Quran tells the Prophet, the mercy to all of humanity, to speak to people in their own language. Following his example, in addition to the translation being unbounded by time, in several sensitive cases, the word chosen to translate an Arabic word is also of a universal or inclusive rather than a particular or exclusive nature. This adds to the broadening of the perspective and scope of the Quran so that it becomes inclusive rather than exclusive to one particular group of people. In other words, in this way a larger audience can relate to its message.

2. The actual word "Islam" comes from the verb, "to submit" (*aslama*), submission (*sallama*), and ones who submit (*muslimun*). The Quran refers to itself (the Quran) from the very beginning of the revelation (68:35).

3. As previously indicated, the four books (Book 25, Book 26, Book 27

and Book 28) are the stories of the other Prophets and Messengers mentioned in the Quran. While these stories do have lessons to be learned by the Prophet and those who heard the revelations as well as for us today, they do not refer directly to Prophet Muhammad and his prophethood following the beginning of the revelation. What remains in these books of the Quranic signs in the 24 years of the chronological Quran relate directly to him, what he did and what he was told to say. This allows us to understand his life directly from the Quranic message, the Quranic Sunnah, without any interruption of the stories about previous Prophets and Messengers.

4. Most English translations of the Quran refer to the "Children of Israel." The word "Israel" when used in the Quran refers to Jacob, the patriarch of the children who followed him such as Joseph. Therefore, it should be the "Children of Jacob" as it appears in these texts.

5. The words "*kufr*" and "*kafir*" have been translated here as "ingratitude" and "ungrateful" where the context allows. This is the first meaning of the word and many of us in our lifetime have met Muslims who are "ungrateful." It is the ungrateful Muslims who practice intolerance by declaring anyone who says: Peace be upon you (*as-salam alaykum*) as a non-believer (with what is called *takfir*). In those cases, it would not be suitable to call them "unbelievers" or "infidels," but it is clearly appropriate to refer to them as being "ungrateful" and this would include the early Quraysh, ungrateful for God's revelation and prophethood of Muhammad, who ridiculed the Prophet and fought against the Quranic message of love, forgiveness and peace.

6. Yet another example of the use of inclusive language in an attempt to speak to people in their own language, is the use of God instead of Allah. Many English speaking Muslims, as well as many of the English translations of the Quran to date, use Allah when speaking English instead of God. The intention on the part of the speaker is to maintain a sense of piety. They feel that using Allah in English moves them in that direction. Many even claim that the word Allah cannot be translated.

However well-intentioned a person may be, when speaking English, the use of the word Allah instead of God, first of all, does not follow the Quranic verse that tells the Prophet to speak to people in their own language. Subsequently, it does not follow the Sunnah of the Prophet who did speak to people in their own language.

In addition, it creates a divide between Muslims who use the word and the English speaking people of various faiths to whom they are speaking. In effect, it creates the illusion that there is more than One God—Allah and God. The response of the English speaking person of another faith is to say: I do not understand your religion; you have a different God than I do and you call Him Allah.

It needs to be clearly explained to English speaking Muslims that, unlike what they may feel, they do not have a monopoly on the word Allah. Arabic

speaking Christians and Arabic speaking Jews also refer to God as Allah. The Old Testament and New Testament, when translated into Arabic, use Allah for God.

English speaking Muslims, therefore, need to recall the message of the Quran that God is One (tawhid). In addition, the Prophet did not bring a new religion but confirmed what was correct in the messages of previous Prophets, namely, that God is One. Finally, they need to follow the example of the Prophet, as the Quran says he is the model or example to be followed, by speaking to people in their own language.

7. The Arabic language, much like old English, has the second person singular (masculine: anta (where the verb ends in *ka*). The English equivalent is the subject: "thou" or the object: "thee" or the possessive: "thy." As these are no longer in common usage in English, wherever the original Arabic uses one of these terms, the word "**you**" or "**your**" appear in bold font so that the reader knows the original was the second person singular. When the Quran is speaking directly to the Prophet, it uses the pronoun "thee" or "thou" so it is an important distinction to make.

Using you (second person plural) is done to help English speaking readers, recognizing that using the second person plural pronoun you (masculine: *antum* where the verb ends in masculine: *kum*) for God is to intimate that God is plural, the only sin in the Quran that is unforgivable. By putting the pronoun **you** in bold font indicates the true intention.

8. For the Arabic word "ayah," the English word used in these texts is "sign" rather than the Biblical term, "verse."

9. Several of the signs were abrogated over time. However the indication of a sign being abrogated was done after the complete revelation of the Quran. Whether or not a sign was later abrogated does not change the fact that the first Muslims who listened to the Quran, heard the signs that may have later been said to have been abrogated and that a hafez of the Quran recites all the signs as they appear in the original Arabic revealed to the Prophet. Whatever signs scholars later determined to be abrogated are still part of the Quran and, therefore, are not relevant to learning to be a Quranic critical thinker, learning HOW to think.

10. The first number that appears when the Quranic Chapters begin refers to the chapter number in the chronological order of the revelation so that Quranic Chapter 110 which was the last to be revealed is number 114 in the chronological order.

11. It is to be noted that whenever the name of Muhammad, Prophet Muhammad or the Prophet are used, one may say a silent prayer of blessings for him.

CRITICAL THINKING• COMPONENT

Quranic critical thinking (furqan, discernment) is a process that analyzes

how we think. It is a 3-step process: I: Quranic critical thinkers apply the Nine **Intellectual Standards** (logic, being definitive, connected, appropriate, have worthiness, include numerous viewpoints, have right judgment, clarity, being fair and just) to: **II: The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** (point of view, purpose, questions, information, inferences, concepts, assumptions, implications): in order to develop: **III: The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** (belief in One God (tawhid), God-consciousness (taqwa), virtuous conduct (birr) or integrity through moral discipline, empowering constancy ('azm) and courage, persevering in goodness (sabara), love (hubb) or empathic altruism (ihsan) and being fair and just (rashad). The signs (ayat) in each section (ruku) teach any or every one of the **Nine Intellectual Standards** or any and every one of the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or any or every one of the **Seven Quranic Moral Traits**.

This is the key to critical thinking. We do not learn "what" to think, but, rather, "how" to think. Using the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** as an example, critical thinking can be summarized in the following sentence: Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** and consequences. We use **concepts**, ideas and theories to **interpret information** (data, facts and experiences) in order to **answer questions,** solve problems, and resolve issues.

The point of view in all cases is that of the Quranic message and the various individuals and groups that it addresses as this series is a course in Quranic Studies as well as a course in the chronological history of the life of the blessed Prophet (sira). Each student is encouraged to come up with his or her own questions and responses to those questions in order to learn how to become the Quranic critical thinker as the Quranic teaches us HOW to think.

It is important to note that there is no correct or incorrect answer. The important point is to go through the process with as many of the sections as one is able to do. Little by little, this will help each student or reader to develop into critical thinkers or "discerners" of the Quranic message creating a bond between them and the Quranic message.

Once we learn to analyze signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. It is important to note that the order of **The Nine Intellectual Standards** or **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or **The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** is not important. With the grace of God, once all are present, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behaviors.

THE NINE INTELLECTUAL STANDARDS

1. LOGIC (REASONABLE: 'AQALA, 'AQL)

2. DEFINITIVENESS (TO BE PRECISE: MUHKAMA)
3. CONNECTEDNESS (CONTAINING COMPLEXITIES AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS: (MUQTARIN)
4. APPROPRIATENESS (TO MAKE RELEVANT: SADID)
5. WORTHINESS (FOCUSING ON THE IMPORTANT, NOT TRIVIAL, TO BE SIGNIFICANT: AHL)
6. NUMEROUS OR MULTIPLE VIEWPOINTS: 'DHARA'A)
7. RIGHT JUDGMENT (RUSHD)
8. CLARITY (UNDERSTANDABLE, TO BE CLEAR: TABAYYANA)
9. BEING FAIR AND JUST ('AQL, RIGHT-MINDED (RASHAD))

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES

1. EMBODYING A POINT OF VIEW, FRAME OF REFERENCE, PERSPECTIVE (RECOLLECT, BEAR IN MIND, TAKE FOR GRANTED: TADHAKKUR)
   - THINKING INDEPENDENTLY
   - DEVELOPING INSIGHT INTO EGO-CENTRICITY OR SOCIO-CENTRICITY
   - EXPLORING THOUGHTS UNDERLYING FEELINGS AND FEELINGS UNDERLYING THOUGHTS
   - DEVELOPING INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY
2. GENERATING A PURPOSE, AIM, GOAL, OBJECTIVE: (CONSIDER: RA'A)
   - CLARIFYING ISSUES OR CONCLUSIONS
   - CLARIFYING AND ANALYZING THE MEANINGS OF WORDS OR PHRASES
   - READING CRITICALLY: CLARIFYING OR DISCERNING THE SACRED TEXT
   - LISTENING CRITICALLY: THE ART OF SILENT DIALOGUE
3. RAISING QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, ISSUES: (REFLECT: TAFAKKARA)
   - PRACTICING DISCUSSION: CLARIFYING AND QUESTIONING INTERPRETATIONS
   - REASONING DIALOGICALLY: COMPARING INTERPRETATIONS
   - REASONING DIALECTICALLY: EVALUATING INTERPRETATIONS KNOWLEDGE, WISDOM
   - DEEP QUESTIONING
4. USING INFORMATION, DATA, FACTS, OBSERVATIONS, EXPERIENCES, REASONED JUDGMENTS (EVIDENCE: BASIRAH)
   - DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION: CLARIFYING VALUES AND STANDARDS
   - ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ACTIONS
   - DISTINGUISHING RELEVANT FROM IRRELEVANT INFORMATION
   - GIVING REASONS AND EVALUATING EVIDENCE
5. MAKING INTERPRETATIONS, INFERENCES, CONCLUSION, SOLUTIONS (UNDERSTANDING: TABASSUR)
   - ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ARGUMENTS AND INTERPRETATIONS
   - MAKING PLAUSIBLE INFERENCES OR INTERPRETATIONS
   - RECOGNIZING CONTRADICTIONS

NOTING SIGNIFICANT SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES
6. UTILIZING CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS, PRINCIPLES, MODELS AND VOCABULARY (RECALL: IDHDHAKARA)
COMPARING ANALOGOUS SITUATIONS: REFRAMING INSIGHTS TO NEW CONTEXTS
DEVELOPING ONE'S PERSPECTIVE: CREATING OR EXPLORING ARGUMENTS
MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS
COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE
THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING
7. MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PREPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED (OPINIONS: ZUNUN)
8. GENERATING IMPLICATIONS, CONSEQUENCES (PONDER, EVALUATE: TADABBUR)
GENERATING OR ASSESSING SOLUTIONS
EXPLORING IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES IN DETAIL

1. Embodying a **Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective** (Recollect, Bear in Mind, Take to Heart (*tadhakkur*)):Whenever we think, we think within a point of view. What is the Quranic point of view in these signs? Does the Quran follow universal intellectual values of clarity, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, logic, fairness?

2. Generating a **Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective** (Consider (*ra'a*)): My purpose in addressing the Quranic purpose in these signs is . . .? Know exactly what you are after. Make sure you are not operating with a hidden agenda and that your announced and real purposes are the same. Whenever we think, we think for a purpose. What is the Quran's fundamental purpose in revealing these signs? Are there multiple points of view?

3. Raising **Questions, Problems, Issues** (Reflect (*tafakkara*)): What is the key question I am trying to answer. State the question as clearly and precisely as you can. Details are very important.

4. Using **Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments** (Evidence (*basirah*)): Actively seek the information most relevant to the question. Include in that information options for action, both short-term and long-term. We use experiences, facts and data that the Quran gives us. What information does the Quran give in these signs? What information do I need to answer my question?

5. Making **Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusions, Solutions** (Understanding (*tabassur*)): After reasoning (discerning) the above

points, decide what the best answer (conclusion) to the question is. What inferences, judgments or conclusions do these signs make? What are my most fundamental inferences or conclusions based on these Quranic signs?

6. Utilizing **Concepts, Theories, Definitions, Axioms, Laws, Principles, Models, Vocabulary** (Recall (*idhdhakara*)): The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are ... ? Figure out all significant ideas needed to understand and answer your question. You may need to analyze these concepts. Use a good dictionary. Inferences or conclusions are based on Quranic concepts and theories. What is the most basic concept in my question? What Quranic terms have I learned?

7. Making **Assumptions, Presuppositions, Taking for Granted** (Opinions (*zunun*)): Some important assumptions I am using in my thinking are ... ? Figure out what you are taking for granted. Watch out for self-serving or unjustified assumptions. The Quranic point of view is based on some assumptions. What assumptions is the Quran using in its reasoning? What assumptions am I using in my reasoning from the Quranic revelation?

8. Generating **Implications, Consequences** (Ponder (*tadabbur*)): Evaluate options. Take into account the advantages and disadvantages of possible decisions before acting? What consequences are likely to follow from this or that decision? The Quranic assumptions and my assumptions lead to implications and consequences. What are the implications of the Quranic reasoning? What are the implications of my reasoning? Am I correct in understanding the Quranic implications?

THE SEVEN QURANIC MORAL TRAITS

1. BELIEF IN ONE GOD (TAWHID)
2. GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (TAQWA)
3. VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE (MORALLY OBLIGATED: QANATA, GOODNESS, BIRR)
4. EMPOWERING CONSTANCY, COURAGE (AZM)
5. PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS (STEADFAST: SABARA)
6. EMPATHIC ALTRUISM (LOVE, MERCY, COMPASSION: HUBB)
7. FAIRNESS (NOT SELF-SERVING OR EGO-CENTRIC: 'AQSATA)

*****

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

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Whereas Drs. Paul and Elder may not have used their work in religious educational settings, due to the separation of church and state in the educating of American students, learning from their works it became clear that their teachings can help Muslim students, as well, if their method is presented through the content of the Quran. If Muslim students come to understand that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking, that is, discernment (furqan), HOW to think, they will be armed with the intellectual skills they need to confront Islamic extremism.

One of the main scholars that Islamic extremists use in their propaganda is Seyyed Qutb. In order to further arm Muslim students for any confrontation they may have with Islamic extremists who would quote that their ideas come from Seyyed Qutb, I have used his Quranic commentary, In the Shade of the Quran, in Chapter I of this work. Students will learn how, contrary to what they may be told or taught, in many cases, Seyyed Qutb's commentary (indicated by °) speaks of and describes the way that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking and Islamic extremists cannot say that I have left out their scholars.

Last, but certainly not least, I wish to thank Kazi Publications and its founder, Liaquat Ali, for his constant support and encouragement to forge new areas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqli*) will be passed to young students as they learn of a Muslim world deeply entrenched in Islamic narrative sciences (*al-naqli*).

INTRODUCTION
READING THE SIGNS: A QURANIC PERSPECTIVE ON THINKING
BY MOHAMMAD HASHIM KAMALI

The Islamic notion of *aql* (intellect) embraces the faith dimension of knowledge that is also informed by ethical values. The prevailing reading of the Quran on rationality consists of a coalition of faith and reason which is also cognizant of the metaphysical aspect of reality and the limits, therefore, of human reason. This may be said to be a dividing line between the Islamic and Western conceptions of rationality, especially in its post-Enlightenment context.

Thus, it is not accurate to draw a direct parallel between them, as was the case in the Islamic discourse of the colonial period wherein many Muslim writers greatly admired the Western conception of rationality. The twentieth century Islamic discourse has shown awareness of that difference as it began to comprehend the subtleties inherent in the Western lexicon on rationality and its cultural overtones.[1]

THE DIVINE SIGNS (*AYAT*)

The Quran teaches an essential doctrine of the *ayat* (God's signs in the universe) functioning as pointers to the providential purpose at all levels of creation. Thus the Quran makes frequent references such as 'signs for a people who understand—exercise their intellect'. This evidential role of the divine signs entails an accompanying demand placed upon humans to engage in a rational understanding of the signs and draw conclusions on the discovery of truth and correct guidance.

The human reception of the signs, thus, depends ultimately upon the integrity of reason, without which humans would be incapable neither of comprehending the signs nor of responding to their message. The more abundant is an individual's native endowment of reason, the greater is the possibility for him or her to attain a larger magnitude of understanding and a higher level of response.

The nexus between faith and reason thus constitutes the hallmark of intelligent Islamic spirituality, wherein human intellect and emotions are guided toward harmony with one another. The Quran repeatedly provokes its reciters to think about the signs of God in the universe and within themselves, to understand God's illustrious presence in them, and ultimately to vindicate the truth. The word *ayah* and its plural *ayat* occur in the Quran over 400 times, although the whole of the Quran introduces itself as a collection of *ayat*. To quote the Quran: *We will cause them to see Our signs on the horizons and*

within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is The Truth. (41:53) And, *On the earth are signs, for the ones that are certain and in yourselves. Will you not, then, perceive?* (51:20-51:21)

God reveals the truth in a variety of ways, some explicit and others by allusion, the latter mainly through the modality of the signs, in order to provoke and engage the human intellect. The signs of God cannot be readjust off the face of the signs but require thinking and reflection. This is indicated in the phrase: *We will cause them to see Our signs* ... which suggests that the signs may not be instantaneously visible to the naked eye. The whole concept of signs seeks to forge a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* (38:29) A sign is also a portent and allusion to something other than itself and should not therefore be seen as the final message and purpose of the revelation containing it.

Approximately 750 verses, or nearly one-eighth of the Quran, exhort the readers to study nature, history, the Quran itself, and humanity at large. The text of the Quran employs a range of expressions in its appeal to those who listen (*yasma'un*), those who think (*yatafakkarun*), those who reflect (*yatadabbarun*), those who observe (*yanzurun*), those who exercise their intellect (*ya'qilun*), those who take heed and remember (*yatadhakkarun*), those who ask questions (*yas'alun*), those who develop an insight (*yatafaqqahun*), and those who know (*ya'lamun*).[2]

These and their derivatives (mostly occurring in the active verbal form) consist essentially of open invocations and encouragement to thinking that is not limited by a methodology or framework. *Meditate they not, then, on the Quran* (*afala yatadabbarun al-Qur'an*) (47:24) *Tadabbur* means concentrated and goal-oriented thinking provoked by the challenge to find something new or to solve a difficult problem.

Quranic references to thinking and the exercise of intellect occur in conjunction with basically five major themes: Belief in the Oneness and generosity of God (*tawhid*); reflection on the Quran; the human being and the universe; historical precedent; and thinking itself.

References to *aql* (intellect) and its derivatives occur on 49 occasions in the text. The typical Quranic expression, *ulu'l-albab* (those who possess vision and understanding), and its synonym, *ulu'l-nuha* (people endowed with intellectual abilities) occur 33 times in the text. Such expressions are frequently juxtaposed with the exposition of signs, such as in the sign: *Thus, God makes manifest His signs to you so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (2:242) or in the sign: *Surely, We made manifest the signs to you so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (57:17). Repeated references to pondering over the signs are variously nuanced such that they embrace within their fold the widest spectrum of people who may be endowed with different intellectual abilities and endowments.[3]

Al-Isfahani defines thought (*al-fikr*) as the power of the mind that facilitates access to knowledge (*'ilm*). Thinking (*al-tafakkur*) is the movement of that power which is driven by the intellect (*al-'aql*), and this can only occur when an initial image of the subject is attainable in the mind of the thinker. Thinking cannot, therefore, proceed over something of which no image exists in the mind. This can be said of the self of God, for example, as we have no image on which to focus our thought.[4]

The human being can only think over the attributes of God through the observation of His signs. Broadly speaking, thinking proceeds over the whole of the created universe without any exception; indeed, the Quran repeatedly invites such in respect to both the physical and abstract aspects of reality, both in the present and in regards to bygone history that is only perceived by the intellect rather than sense perception. Often the Quran gives examples, parables, and narratives of other nations, and then follows them with the reminder, usually addressed to the Prophet, to recount the narratives of the past so that the people may think and reflect over them:

And recount to them the tiding of him to whom We gave Our signs. (7:175)

And there are the parables that We propound for humanity so that perhaps they will reflect. (59:21)

Truly, in that are certainly signs for a folk who reflect. (30:21)

A hierarchy of five perceptive-cognitive functions is also suggested, including and extending through hearing, sight, thinking, dhikr remembrance, and certainty.[5]

Given such a scale of intensified perceptive understanding, the Quran propounds the notion of *ulul'l-albab*, the thoughtful individuals who are possessed of proper understanding and response. *'Aql* is thus tied to the cognitive dimension of faith.

Significantly, the very term for reason and intelligence in Arabic, *al-'aql*, has at the core of its basic meaning the practical idea of "restraining" and "binding," that is, of holding one's self back from blameworthy conduct—being an interior self-imposed limit. Quranic commentators understand thinking (*tafakkur, tafkir*) as pondering and reflection, which is a mental activity and process, not an outcome.

Thinking (*tafakkur*) is considered as a form of worship of God if it is done with sincerity and good purpose. *'Aql* in its Quranic conception is also one that conceives the truth, and it is always in search of it. This conception of *'aql* precludes one that is rigid, arrogant, and misleading. Some have also drawn the conclusion from the ubiquitous Quranic emphasis on thinking that all Muslims must strive to be thinking individuals.[6]

Al-Qaradawi has quoted Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's (d. 751/1350) own observation as well as some epithetic statements, the latter narrated from other leading figures to the effect that "thinking for an hour is better than worship of many years," and another statement that "thinking for an hour is superior

to a whole night of prayer." To this Ibn Qayyim added that "thinking is the act of the heart whereas worship is the act of one's limbs, and the former is superior to the latter."

The pious caliph Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz (d. 101/718) is similarly quoted: Thinking over the bounties of God is the best form of worship. Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad went so far as to say that: Thinking—*al-tafkir*—is an Islamic obligation. Just as God Most High ordered us to worship Him by performing prayer and fasting, He also ordered us to think in numerous verses and in so many different ways, all of which vindicate thinking as one of the cardinal messages of the Quran.[7]

The Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge espoused with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression *al-tafaqquh fi'l-din*, that is, understands the religion, signifying a rational and inquisitive approach to constructing a Quranic worldview.

Islam, in other words, advises analytical knowledge and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely dogmatic approach. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions: Faith based on detailed analysis (*al-iman al-tafsili*) as opposed to undigested and uncomprehended faith (*al-iman al-ijmali*). The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the religious scholars of all the leading schools of thought. Thus it is declared in a sign: *But a section of people only that they become learned in the way of life and that they warn their folk.* (9:122).

We also note the distinction between thought-based knowledge and transmitted or received knowledge reflected in the twin juristic and hadith-related expressions of knowledge based on understanding (*'ilm al-diraya*), and report-based and transmitted knowledge (*'ilm al-riwaya*). The former is based on understanding and insight (*diraya wa tafaqquh*) and takes priority over the latter. Whereas *'ilm al-riwaya* relies mainly on memory and retention, *'ilm al-diraya* is based on cognition, understanding, and analysis.

Thus, if there are hadith reports, or any factual reports for that matter, which do not stand to reason and understanding, they would be most likely discounted and abandoned, with the exception only of devotional matters (*'ibadat*) which are based on faith and submission more than on rational analysis.

Another feature of the Quranic vision of thinking is indicated in its emphasis on wisdom and good judgment (*hikmah*) which signifies the quality of thinking, its regard for values, and its outcome. Wisdom and good judgment can easily be said to be more important than technical know-how and expertise, as it can guide expert knowledge as to its proper application and the attainment of excellence.

The Quran mentions *hikmah* twenty times, and in about ten of these it is immediately preceded by the word Book or *kitab*, which is a reference to divine scripture—primarily the Quran, but also other divinely revealed scriptures. The text, thus, says with reference to Jesus: *And He teaches him the Book and wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel.* (3:48) The juxtaposition of *kitab* and *hikmah* is often contextualized by a reference to the sending of prophets who teach the people and guide them with scripture and wisdom (e.g., *wa yu'allimuhum al-kitaba wa'l-hikmata*) as it is said of the Prophet Muhammad: *And teaches you the Book and wisdom* (2:159) and: *Teaches them the Book and wisdom* (62:2 ff); the descendants of Prophet Abraham: *We gave the people of Abraham the Book and wisdom* (4:54); and of Luqman: *We gave Luqman wisdom* (31:12). The holistic, superior, and indivisible value of *hikmah* in the Quran is underscored in one of its signs to the effect that when God bestows wisdom on someone that person is indeed granted an immense source of goodness: *And whomever is given wisdom, then, surely, was given much good and none recollects no doubt but those imbued with intuition.* (2:269).

To mention *hikmah* together with the Book evidently means that the Quran should be read with wisdom and divorcing the one from the other by taking a totally dogmatic approach to the Quran goes against the divine purpose and intention of its revelation. To read the Quran in the light of *hikmah* thus means a comprehensive reading that reaches beyond the obvious meaning of its words to encapsulate the goal and purpose of its message and then also reflection on the ways and means of how its benefits can be realized for the individual and society.[8]

The repeated juxtaposition of the "Book and *Hikmah*" in the Quran led some commentators, such as the Successor, Qatadah ibn Diama al-Sadusi (d.118 H), Ibn Wahhab, the disciple of Imam Malik (d. 179/795), and the Imam al-Shafii (d. 205/820) himself to the somewhat unusual observation that "*hikmah*" is a reference to the Sunna of the Prophet. Many have taken and followed this view; but since the text does not specify such a meaning for *hikmah*, the word should convey its natural and unqualified meaning as I have depicted in this presentation.

Good judgment, insight, balance and avoidance of extremes, the ability to distinguish between truth and falsehood, and procedural accuracy are commonly associated with *hikmah* and *hikmah* as such becomes a dimension of evaluative thinking in. its Quranic idiom. Besides, when the Quran declares that God Most High endowed the Prophets David and Solomon and also the renowned sage Luqman with *hikmah*, it could not have referred to the Sunna of the Prophet Muhammad, as Sunna as such did not exist in those times.

The Quranic usage of *hikmah* reinforces the holistic quality of thinking. *Hikmah* also seeks to forge a close tie between reason and emotion (*'aql wa qalb*) thereby encouraging what is now known as emotional intelligence. This

is how the Quran and also the Sunna often deliver their messages, for, unlike the modern statutory laws and texts, the Quranic guidance, commands, and prohibitions are often espoused with appeals to the heart and mind of their readers.[9]

Al-Isfahani defined *hikmah* as the realization of the truth through knowledge and intellect and it is manifested in the performance of benevolent deeds.[10] According to another definition: Wisdom signifies comprehension of the truth and reality and the ability to avoid corruption in one's quest to attain perfection."[11]

Random House Dictionary of the English Language similarly defines wisdom as: Knowledge of what is true or right coupled with just judgment as to action. Wisdom is thinking informed by the light of the heart that often leads to action and contemplates its consequences in relationship with other relevant factors. This may strike a note with the renowned hadith in which it is declared that: Fearing God is the pinnacle of wisdom (*ra's al-hikmati makhafat Allah*)."[12]

It is presumably for this reason that the great religions of the world have urged the seekers of knowledge to combine it with wisdom. It is wisdom that confers a higher quality on thinking and helps knowledge to be used for the promotion of good giving it meaning and direction.

In an effort to train the individual to enhance his or her quality of thinking, al-Ghazali (d. 505/1111) discusses the two sources of knowledge that Muslim tradition has recognized. One of these is through human teaching and learning (*al-ta'allum al-insani*) and the other through divine teaching (*al-ta'lim al-rabbani*).

The former is externally transmitted from teacher to student, whereas the latter is conveyed by the Universal Intellect which is superior, more intense, and more effective than human teaching. This knowledge is internally acquired either through revelation (*wahy*), which is a prerogative of the Prophets, or it is acquired through meditation, thinking, and reflection.

Al-Ghazali subscribes to the view that the essence of all knowledge is centered in the inner self of the human person in much the same way as growth potential that is vested in the soil and seed, and it is through teaching that the individual's potential is developed.[13] These two aspects of knowledge, that is, the external and the internal, are complementary to one another. This is because no one can possibly teach or learn from any teacher all the sciences, some of which are learned through teaching but the rest inferred by the reflective thought of the individual. It is therefore important that the avenues of learning remain open both through teaching and through inner reflection, thinking, and illumination. This is another way of saying that all knowledge is acquired and developed through the senses, inner reflection and thinking, both of which partake in natural endowment and development through external transmission and teaching.

Al-Ghazali's views on the internal and external sources of knowledge tended to correspond with those of Ibn Sina (d. 428/1037), but which differed, at least partially, from those of the second/ninth century Ikhwan al-Safa (c. 373/983). All knowledge, according to the latter, is acquired through the senses and none inheres in human nature. Knowledge that is developed through thought and reflection also originate in the senses. The same analysis is extended to the axiomatic knowledge of postulates that are derived and confirmed through the senses. In support of this theory Ikhwan al-Safa have cited the Quranic verse: *And God brought you out from the wombs of your mothers and you know nothing.* (16:78). All knowledge is therefore acquired knowledge, a view which may strike a closer note with some of the modern theories on the subject.[14]

Muslim thought in the middle ages did not admit the ontological distinction between tangible entities that could be sensuously apprehended and entities of a spiritual or subliminal nature. This may be said to be a more sound and realistic view of reality than is allowed for by the modern positivist doctrines of science. Being is manifested at various levels and in several forms, none of which is less real than the other. Arabic thought employed the notions systematized in Stoic theory that divide being into three locations: Verbal utterance, psychic representation, and reality—without this last in any sense having exclusive title to Being.

Al-Farabi (d. 950 CE) took up this view and assimilated psychic representation to the entities of reason. Others rehearsed this division with the addition of a fourth location, that of Scripture. Reality thus had a four-fold manifestation, depending on whether the subject existed immediately in itself or whether its like was graven in the mind (*dhihn*, psyche) composed of sounds, which together indicates the psychic representation, or was manifested in characters standing for sound and speech. All four have a basic characteristic in common which is existence (*wujud, haqiqah*).[15]

The Islamic and Western perceptions of creative and evaluative thinking both recognize this to be a skill that is developed through training and controlled exercise. It is through training and thinking that we adopt new patterns of perceiving reality that we are able to see differently and creatively. It is generally acceded that creative thinking and critical thinking go hand-in-hand and complement one another. Critical thinking means "involving or exercising skilled judgment or observation." Thinking is critical when it evaluates the reasoning behind a decision. Such evaluation must, however, be carried forth in a constructive manner.[16]

The purpose of critical thinking is to achieve understanding, evaluate viewpoints, and solve problems. In general, one's thinking is likely to become critical when concrete learning experiences precede abstract thought.[17] This strikes a parallel note, in its Islamic idiom, with thinking that is espoused with *hikmah*.

The famous yet controverted hadith: The first (being) God created is the intelligence (*awwalu ma khalaqa Allahu al-'aqla*), sparked prolonged discussions among Muslim thinkers over many centuries over the implications of this statement. Among the issues debated was the priority of reason over revelation and the respective role of each in their mutual inter-dependence.

Another issue was whether the disparity among humans in respect of reason also affected the modalities of moral obligation. Some prominent thinkers including Abu Bakr al-Razi (d. 313/925) apparently advocated the primacy of reason over the revelation. This would be properly known as "rationalism," which deems the primacy of reason over revelation. This is different from "rationality" which means treating any issue by using reason without giving reason priority.

SOURCES AND INSTRUMENTS OF KNOWLEDGE

Commenting on the Quranic passage quoted earlier, Muhammad Iqbal observed that the Quran regards both self (*anfus*) and world (*afaq*) as sources of knowledge. God reveals His signs in inner as well as outer experience. The Quran thus opens fresh vistas of knowledge in the domain of our inner experience. Mystic experience and intuition, then, however unusual and abnormal, must now be regarded as perfectly natural and open to scrutiny like other aspects of human experience." But inner experience is only one source of human knowledge. The outer experience in the Quran, Iqbal continues on the same page, unfolds two other sources of knowledge—nature and history, and it is in tapping these sources of knowledge that "the spirit of Islam is seen at its best".

The Quran sees the signs of reality in the sun, the moon, the alternation of day and night, the perpetual changes of the winds, the variety of human colors and tongues, and in fact in the whole of nature as revealed to the sense-perception of man. The Muslim's duty is to reflect on these signs and not to pass by them as if he is deaf and blind *They have hearts with which they understand not. And they have eyes with which they perceive not. And they have ears with which they hear not. Those are like flocks. Nay! They are ones who go astray. Those, they are the ones who are heedless* (7:179), for he who does not see these signs in this life will remain blind to the realities of the life to come. The divine signs are observed through sense-perception using mainly the faculties of hearing, sight, and intellect: *Journey they not through the earth? Have they not hearts with which to be reasonable or ears with which to hear?* (22:46) The emphasis in this sign is on the faculty of reason and understanding, suggesting that not all of our information about nature comes directly from sensation, for if that were the case we would be no different from animals.

Frequent references to sense-perception as the principal mode of receiv-

ing the signs show the scientific/experimental import of the Quran. The Quran goes even further to suggest sense perception as the only avenue of knowledge, as the text already reviewed provides: *And God brought you out from the wombs of your mothers and you know nothing. And He assigned to you the ability to hear and sight and mind so that perhaps you will give thanks.* (16:78) Knowledge of the signs is therefore acquired through the use of these faculties. In another sign, the Quran praises those who listen to the word and follow the best of it: *Those who listen to the saying of the Quran and follow the fairer of it. Those are those whom God guided. And those, they are imbued with intuition.* (or make the best possible interpretation thereof) (39:18). This sign apparently subjects the data of sense-perception to the exercise of intellectual selection. The text also teaches that sense-perception does not perceive all reality: *So I swear an oath by what you perceive and what you perceive not.* (69:37-69:38). Certainty (*yaqin*) may also be beyond the reach of human intellect, as the human mind may be blurred by the variables of time and space. What is deemed certain today may be uncertain tomorrow.

We also note that according to the teachings of the Quran, the universe is dynamic in its origin, finite, and capable of increase. Early Muslim thinkers do not seem to have grasped the Quranic emphasis on inductive reasoning and experimentation. It was indeed a slow realization for Muslim thinkers to note "that the spirit of the Quran was essentially anti-classical". Putting full confidence in Greek reasoning, Muslim thinkers tried to understand the Quran in the light of Greek philosophy, which in the beginning of their careers they had studied with so much enthusiasm.

The substance of Iqbal's analysis on this subject is also upheld by Malik bin Nabi (1905-1973), who understands the creative impulse of the Quran as the motivating force behind the efflorescence of science at a time when Muslim thinkers began to grasp the full impact of the Quran on experimentation and inductive reasoning.[18]

The dynamic conception of the universe in the Quran is also seen by its conception of life as an evolutionary movement in time. History thus constitutes the third source of knowledge in the Quran. It is one of the most essential teachings of the Quran, as Iqbal has further observed, that nations are collectively judged, and suffer for their misdeeds here and now. The Quran thus constantly cites historical instances, and urges upon the reader to reflect on the past and present experiences of humanity: *Customs passed away before you. So journey through the earth; then, look on how had been the Ultimate End of the ones who deny.* (3:137)

If a wound afflicts you, surely, a wound afflicted the folk similar to that. And these are the days We rotate among humanity so that God knows those who believed and takes witnesses to Himself from among you. (3:140)

And: *And of whom We created there is a community that guides with The Truth, and with it, it is just. And those who denied Our signs, We will draw*

them on gradually from where they will not know. (7:181-183)

The Quran's interest in history as a source of human knowledge extends farther than mere indication of historical generalizations. "It has given us one of the most fundamental principles of historical criticism."[19] Since accuracy in recording facts is an indispensable condition of history as a science, accuracy depends ultimately on those who report them. The reporter's personal character is thus an important factor in judging his testimony. The Quran says *O those who believed! If one who disobeys drew near to you with a tiding, then, be clear so that you not light on a folk out of ignorance.* (49:6). It is the application of the principle embodied in this sign to the reporters of the Prophet's traditions out of which were gradually evolved the canons of historical criticism.

A scientific treatment of history, however, requires a wider experience, a greater maturity of practical reason, and a fuller realization of certain basic ideas regarding the nature of life and time. These are in the main three, and taken together they constitute the foundation of Quranic teaching.

(1) The unity of human origin: The Quran states: *He creates you from one soul.* (39:6) And: *O humanity! Be God-conscious of your Lord Who created you from a single soul.* (4:1). But the perception of life as an organic unity is a slow achievement. Islam sowed the germ of this aspiration and it became a Quranic assignment of us to work towards its realization. Notwithstanding the fact that Christianity, long before Islam, brought the message of equality to humanity, the Roman Empire had no more than a general and abstract conception of human unity.

On the other hand, the growth of territorial nationalism in Europe has tended to stifle the broad human element in the art and literature of Europe. European colonialism was also inspired by a self-image of superiority. Europe assumed a superior image that non-European peoples could be freely dominated, exploited, and subjugated.[20] It was quite otherwise with Islam. The impulse of Islam was from the outset to make the idea of human unity a living factor in the Muslim experience that was to be taken towards fuller fruition.

(2) A keen sense of the reality of time, and the concept of life as a continuous movement in time: The Quranic view of the alternation of day and night as a sign of the ultimate Reality which appears in a fresh glory every moment and the tendency in Muslim metaphysics to regard time as objective—all this constituted the intellectual heritage and ideals of Islam.

(3) The merger between religious and secular values: This is a unique feature of Islamic thought which is distinguished by its attempt to bring harmony between them, probably for the first time in history. It was in the state of Madinah that we encounter a clear example where universally proclaimed moral values formed the criteria of political judgment. Political leaders and statesmen were expected to recognize not only the value of efficiency, but also of justice, human dignity, equality, and freedom. In his renowned *Phi-*

losophy of History, Hegel (1770-1831) recognized that the unity between the secular and the spiritual took place in Islamic society and civilization long before it made any impact in the modern West: We must therefore regard (the reconciliation between the secular and spiritual) as commencing rather in the enormous contrast between the spiritual religious principles, and the barbarian Real World. For spirit as the consciousness of an inner world is, at the commencement, itself still in the abstract form. All that is secular is consequently given over to rudeness and capricious violence. The (Muslim) principle, the enlightenment of the oriental world, is the first to contravene this barbarism and caprice. We find it developing itself later and more rapidly than Christianity; for the latter needed eight centuries to grow into a political form.[21]

The modern West followed the example of the historical Islamic world in demanding that holders of political power operate under a set of moral rules. But as the modern West harmonized the secular and religious only nationally, the international realm was free to operate under the dynamics of power politics and secular rudeness. This failure was a cause of the senseless violence that claimed over 100 million war victims in the twentieth century. Recognition of the danger of the purely secular politics led to the creation of the United Nations, yet even this effort was undermined by political realists who enjoyed a disproportionate sway among the political pundits of Europe and America.

Safi has rightly noted the irony that contemporary Muslim societies have unfortunately followed a similar course in decoupling the secular and the religious and now find themselves entangled in a crisis of legitimacy. Many Muslim regimes are driven by the logic of power and operate outside the realm of moral correctness. It is alarming to see that this decoupling has impacted the religiously inspired movements, which seem to succumb to the logic of power in their readiness to employ amoral--even immoral--strategies in their fight against political corruption and oppression.[22]

OBSTACLES TO CORRECT REASONING

The Quranic emphasis on pondering over the signs is also underscored by a set of guidelines to ensure a correct outcome of reflection and thinking over them. The text thus draws attention to a series of exclusions and factors that stand in the way of the proper functioning of intellect:

(1) Pursuit of caprice (*hawa*) which may consist of love, hatred, pomposity and prejudice that confound impartiality and sound judgment: *Had you considered he who took to himself his own desire as his god and whom God caused to go astray out of a knowledge, sealed over his having the ability to hear and his heart and laid a blindfold on his sight? Who, then, will guide him after God? Will you not, then, recollect?* (45:23)

And if you had followed their desires after what drew near you of the knowledge, there is not for you from God either a protector or a helper. (2:120)

But if they respond not to you, then, know that they only follow their own

desires. (28:50)

And: *And obey not him whose heart We made neglectful of Our Remembrance and who followed his own desires and whose affair had been excess.* (18:28)

The choice is between two alternatives: caprice (*hawa*) and guidance (*huda*); the former evidently renders obscure one's attempt to attain the latter.

(2) Pursuit of conjecture in the face of certitude: And surely conjecture (*al-zann*) avails nothing against the truth (*al-Haqq*). *And most of them follow nothing but opinion. Truly, opinion avails them not against The Truth at all.* (10:36)

And follow up not of what there is not for you knowledge of it. Truly, having the ability to hear and sight and mind, each of those will have been that which is asked. (17:36) Knowledge and truth stand in contradistinction with the pursuit of conjecture. Note that the text says one should not follow conjecture until it is established and elevated to the rank of knowledge. It does not say that one should avoid conjecture altogether. In another place, conjecture occurs side by side with *hawa* or that which they themselves desire: *They follow nothing but opinion and that for which their souls yearn.* (53:23) This is the kind of conjecture or opinion that is meant.

Knowledge is established by sense-perception that often begins with a measure of speculation and doubt but which is affirmed by the light of reason and conviction. Some commentators maintain that the main context for this guideline is religion: Thus it is said that one should not take speculative positions in matters of belief. As for scientific enquiry and pursuit of knowledge, conjecture is neither discouraged nor avoidable.[23]

The ultimate purpose of this engagement is to attain the truth. Once the truth is attained, one should then commit oneself to it and observe it: *And what else is there after The Truth but wandering astray. Where, then, turn you away?* (10:32)

Completed was the Word of your Lord in sincerity and justice. There is no one who changes His Words. (54) (6:115).

(3) Blind imitation of others: The correct exercise of reason in Islam is tied to personal conviction as opposed to indiscriminate following of others, hallowed custom, and precedent. These must be judged in the light of reason and abandoned if found deviant and misleading: The misguided will say, as the Quran provides: *Nay! We will follow whatever we discovered our fathers were following on it —even though their fathers had been not at all reasonable—nor are they truly guided.* (2:170)

And: *Enough is what we found our fathers upon. Even though their fathers had been knowing nothing nor are they truly guided?* (5:104)

This was the response that Prophet Abraham and other great prophets received from their detractors, but the text address them again and again that both you and your ancestors were clearly misguided. *Certainly, We gave Abraham his right judgment before. And We had been ones who know of him when*

he said to his father and his folk: What are these images to which you be ones who give yourselves up to? They said: We found our fathers as ones who are worshippers of them. He said: Certainly, you and your fathers had been in a clear wandering astray.(21:51-21:54)

Forsake those who took to themselves their way of life as a pastime and as a diversion and whom this present life deluded. (6:70)

Is it that your formal prayer commands you that we leave what our fathers worship? (11:87)

As we shall presently elaborate, indiscriminate imitation of others is widely held to be the single most damaging cause of the decline of creative thinking among Muslims.

(4) Oppressive Dictatorship: The Quran takes to task arrogant dictators and those who support them and follow them. Hence the plea of those who say: *Our Lord! Truly, we obeyed our chiefs and our great ones. They caused us to go astray from the way* (33:66) should be of no merit. In a number of other places the text denounces the Pharaoh and Karun for their oppressive ways who misled their people in rejecting the guidance that was conveyed to them. *Pharaoh and his Council but they followed the command of Pharaoh. And the command of Pharaoh was not well-intended.* (11:96)

DECLINE OF CRITICAL THINKING

I shall not retrace well-documented history that Muslim thinkers were pioneers in the creation of new knowledge. It was due to the impact of the Quran that, in contrast to the Greeks who excelled in deductive method of reasoning and logic, Muslim scientists distinguished themselves in inductive and experimental approaches to scientific enquiry. The golden period of Muslim science started around 700 AD and lasted until about 1350 AD. Great thinkers such as Ibn Sina, Jabir ibn Hayyan, Abu Bakr Zakarriya al-Razi, Abu Rayhan al-Biruni, Ibn al-Nafis al-Dimashgi, al-Khawarizmi, and many others have left a rich legacy of contributions to the advancement of sciences in anatomy, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, optics, etc.[24]

After the fourteenth century creative thinking began to decline in the Islamic world due to a variety of factors, including the Mongol invasion and burning of Baghdad, the defeat of the Muslim Arabs in Spain and the continuing crusades, the collapse of the Ottoman caliphate, and the ensuing onslaught of European colonialism. The creative impulse of Islamic thought suffered setbacks as a result. Muslims were also beset with many internal problems including the alienation of philosophers, scientists, and thinkers from the theologians, sectarian controversies, and the prevalence of intellectual conservatism and imitation of past authority (*taqlid*)).

Philosophy and the sciences fell into a rapid decline while more rigid forms of instruction and narrower curricula prevailed. It was argued that orthodoxy was being threatened and that there was a need to restrain thinkers in order to defend religion. The latitude and diversity of discourse that expanded

the scope of religious sciences, theology (*kalam*), commentary (*tafsir*), hadith, and jurisprudence (*fiqh*) gave way to narrower criteria of *kufr*, *bidah*, and *taqlid* and the so-called closing of the door of *ijtihad* (*sadd bab al-ijtihad*).[25]

More recently, a certain abuse of Islamic authority operated by a dogmatic radicalism has exacerbated the decline of creative thought among Muslims. The situation is not helped by the prevalence of passivity in popular culture concerning the dogmatic excesses of these ardent proponents of imitation of past authority (*taqlid*). One of the salient features of this mindset is a certain ignorance of the essential impulse of the Quran on creative thought. Malik bin Nabi put it succinctly that the crisis of a civilization and a society at a critical point of its history "is not the paucity of its material objects but the poverty of its ideas."[26]

WHAT IS *IJTIHAD*?

The Quranic appeal to rational thinking and enquiry is not restrained by the methodology of *ijtihad*. There is, in fact, no clear text on *ijtihad*[27] in the Quran. *Ijtihad* as a concept originates in the hadith of the Prophet and the practice and precedent of companions. The methodology of *ijtihad* which is the basic theme of the science of the sources of law (i.e. *usul al-fiqh*) is itself a product of *ijtihad*. It seems that the Prophet also saw *ijtihad* as a creative impulse rather than engaging in the technicalities of legal reasoning—as the *usul al-fiqh* later developed in abundance. When the Prophet spoke of *ijtihad* or when he approved of its application, he seems to have done so in terms of *ijtihad* qua creative thinking.

One would readily admit that imposing restrictions on thinking, even if it were possible, by cultures and legal traditions could be exaggerated, in which case it would be prone to acquiring negative dimensions. One would not, on the other hand, advocate free thinking that is not limited by some kind of goal-orientation and values. Even the actual process of creative thinking, as earlier noted, is a skill that could be learned and refined by stages to direct it into productive avenues. The liberal tradition of the West tends to impose minimal restrictions on thinking whereas Islam tends to take a more guided approach to creative reasoning. Whereas both the Islamic and Western traditions recognize the authority of reason as a criterion of judgment, the liberal tradition has, unlike Islam, isolated spirituality and faith from the ambit of scientific rationality.

However, the methodology of *ijtihad* was also influenced in the course of time by a variety of factors, including the political climate, the change of caliphate (*khilafah*) to monarchy (*mulk*), Hellenistic thought in relationship to analogy (*qiyas*) and its syllogistic components, and the rift between the religious scholars and ruling authorities.[28]

Usul al-fiqh and its proposed methodology followed a difficult course and became embroiled in technicality that had adverse consequences for *ijti-*

had. What is needed now is to recapture the purity of this vital concept, to make *ijtihad* as our principal instrument for originality and healthy adjustment, but also to revise and reform some aspects of the theory of *ijtihad* itself that are no longer responsive to the prevailing conditions and challenges of our time.

I have elsewhere discussed the theory of *ijtihad* and its related issues and space here does not permit engagement in detail.[29] Yet I conclude this section by suggesting, however briefly, that the conventional theory of *ijtihad* needs to be revised and reformed in respect of the need:

1) to recognize the validity of collective and consultative *ijtihad* (*ijtihad jama'i*) side by side with that of *ijtihad* by individual scholars;

2) to allow experts in other fields such as science, economics, and medicine to carry out *ijtihad* in their respective fields if they are equipped with adequate knowledge of the source evidence of Islam. They may alternatively sit together with, or seek advice from, those learned in *Shariah.*

Ijtihad has in the past been often used as an instrument of diversity and disagreement rather than of unity and consensus. Although disagreement must admittedly be allowed in principle, yet there is a greater need today for unity and consensus. Scholars and learned bodies should not perhaps encourage excessive engagement in diversity of schools and sects but try to find ways that would help to close the gap between them and encourage unity on principles. This may require policy guidelines for different settings and countries, and, if so, that should be reflected in our approaches to *ijtihad.* Certain guidelines may also be provided by thinkers and leaders to stimulate consensus-oriented *ijtihad* within the ranks of the judiciary and legislative assemblies.

Ijtihad has in the past been conceived basically as a legal concept and methodology. Our understanding of the source evidence on *ijtihad* does not specify such a framework for *ijtihad.* Rather, we think of the original conception of *ijtihad* as a problem-solving formula for the problems encountered by individual Muslims and the Muslim community. This would confirm our view of the need to broaden the scope of *ijtihad* to other disciplines beyond the framework of *fiqh* and *usul al-fiqh.*

According to a legal maxim of Islamic jurisprudence, there should be no *ijtihad* in the presence of a clear text of the Quran and Hadith (*la ijtihad ma'al-nass*). This maxim should also be revised. This is because of the possibility that the text in question could now be seen in a different light and given a fresh interpretation in a different context. What we are saying is that the legal text may need to be understood first and that by itself may involve *ijtihad.* Hence *ijtihad* may not be precluded if it could advance a fresh understanding of the text in the first place.

The persistent decline of critical reason among Muslims is due partly to the notion that the exercise of personal judgment and *ijtihad* ceased with the epoch-making works of the legists and imams of the past. Added to this is the

prevailing mindset that a Muslim should follow one or the other of the established schools of thought and abandon his judgment in favor of interpretations of the earlier centuries whose originators could have no conception of the necessities of the twenty-first century Muslims. Until about 1500 CE, independent *ijtihad* allowed Muslims and Muslim societies to continually adapt in the face of changing societal conditions and new advances in knowledge.

Unfortunately, as Muslim civilization began to weaken about four centuries ago in the face of Western advances, Muslims began to adopt a more conservative stance in an attempt to preserve traditional values and institutions. As a result Muslim thinkers became inclined to view innovation and adaptation negatively. For all the rhetoric and symbolic form of the neo-radicals that tend to dominate the audience of Muslims, the spirit of Islam is often palpably missing from their endeavors, while more than ever *ijtihad* is needed where women, education, and politics are concerned.

ISLAM AND THE WEST

Scientific rationality essentially reduces intelligence to the level of neural chemistry where mental and behavioral phenomena are understood merely as manifestations of physical processes. It tends to deprive us of our noblest dimensions (faith, love, beauty), separates the soul from the body, and the sensory from the intelligible. In the realm of economics, we are merely a producer and consumer of goods and is moved solely by our individual self-interest. This too is opposed to the Islamic viewpoint which also sees in us morality and transcendent faith.

This physicalist analysis of intelligence is now increasingly being seen as conceptually inadequate. The real question is whether one may admit a human dimension which is autonomous and irreducible to a physical mass. In Moravia's phrase "can one posit something which exists and yet at the same time is non physical? Do the rejection of the soul and the achievements attained by bio and neurosciences oblige us to hold that man is nothing but body?"[30] Recently these have been attempted by some creative thinkers to reconceptualize intentions of 'reason' and 'intelligence' along anti-materialistic lines drawing on the experience of older non-Western traditions, or even popular folk conceptions.[31]

Islamic philosophy—which mainly studies purposes, as against science which mainly studies causes—sees, in line with the Quranic teaching, the role of objects and events as signs of divine presence and action. Faith is understood by Muslims not as a limitation on science but as its vista for enrichment and perfection.[32]

The variant perspectives of Western philosophy and science are also behind the Western puzzlement why Muslims have not become more secularized. This unwarranted assumption has in the past led to mistaken assessments of Islam and continues to foster genuine misunderstanding concerning the real

nature of Islamic religion and intellectual traditions. The misunderstanding is unfortunately not unique to Westerners. For the majority of Muslims today are also woefully uninformed of the depth and scope of their rich heritage on the authoritative validity of reason. Thinking Muslims should work to vindicate the symbiotic relation of faith and reason in their religion and see it as a source of enrichment and contribution of Islam to human understanding and civilization.

CONCLUSION

This essay advanced a Quranic perspective on thinking, which is affirmative in critical and goal-oriented thinking and also provides a set of guidelines that ensures its purity and purpose from negative reductionist influences. The guidelines so provided are also rich in advancing a spiritual dimension with the understanding that thinking which is not informed by morality and faith can lose its direction and purpose and can even become harmful to human welfare. From the Quranic vantage point, the sciences of nature should be key to our cognition of the signs of God in the universe. For this may be instrumental in solving individual and social problems without interrupting the cosmic order and the human habitat on earth. The blatant disregard of ethical values in science has weakened scientists' sense of responsibility and contributed to the degradation of the human condition on the globe.

Since thinking is a skill that can be advanced by self-application and training, it is amenable to guidance, bereavement, and enrichment. Universities and institutions of learning in Muslim countries are generally short of resources, and those who have the means still fall short, to their detriment, of nurturing the culture of reading and research among their students and scholars. Centers of higher learning may do well to establish a new order of relationship between the natural sciences and humanities, and between all fields of knowledge and human welfare and also the avenues of benefit to society. The present-day education system is due for a reappraisal in order to instill creative thinking and breadth of vision among students and scholars that is informed by the inter-relatedness of the various disciplines of learning. This could be done, as one observer suggested, "by adding sufficient number of courses in humanities to the science and engineering curricula, by cross-disciplinary interaction and collaboration."[33] The main characteristic of the human sciences, from the Islamic perspective, is that they are not value-free and have to be incorporated within the value system of Islam that is informed by the ethical and human dimension of values.

It is ironic to note, however, that the vast majority of Muslims are wont to rote reading of the Quran which is patently vacuous and devoid of thinking. The Quran is usually read, committed to memory, and cited for its spiritual merit rather than intellectual stimulation and enrichment. This is evidently not the advice one obtains from the Quran itself Al-Qaradawi has rightly observed

about the current realities of public education in Muslim countries that "the system relies on memorization and cramming more than it does on comprehension and analysis. A typical weakness of this method is that the memorizer forgets as soon as the exams are over. But if what is learned is founded in understanding and comprehension, its substance will remain in the mind and will not be prone to oblivion so quickly."[34]

But the issue that we raise here is well-entrenched and originates in the overall emphasis that most educationists and jurists of earlier times have placed on the study of the Quran, Hadith and *fiqh* manuals, often calling attention to words and sentences of the text at the expense of comprehension and analysis. The basic approach to Quran studies thus emphasized correct pronunciation and memorization. This repetitive system of learning was particularly pronounced in the context of child education, although it was not confined to this framework as other and more advanced levels of Islamic scholarship also bore the same influence.[35]

Notwithstanding the profound influence of the Quran on the thoughts, mores, and cultures of Muslim individuals and societies, thinking by its nature does not lend itself to any predetermined framework and guideline. It seems that the Quran also seeks only to provide signs and signposts on thinking, but the subjective and innately individual bent of thinking is often inspired by imagination and insight which cannot be encapsulated by definitions and guidelines. A creative mind is unique by its attributes, and thinking that originates in a learned and upright individual is one of the greatest gifts of creation that can itself fit the description of divine example, or sign, of God on earth.

It remains to be added though that imaginative thinking has also been sparkled by sources and influences among great Muslim thinkers of other cultures and traditions—just as we note also that the great thinkers of history emerged in all regions, cultures, and religions. The substance of these statements is upheld in a renowned Hadith in which the Prophet instructed the Muslims to "seek knowledge, even unto China," and in another Hadith that "wisdom is the lost property of the believer; he is entitled to it wherever he finds it."

Knowledge and wisdom must therefore be ultimately seen as the shared achievements of humanity, endowed and posited by its outstanding and creative thinkers. This is also known from the fact that the outcomes of creative thinking are often shared and experienced far beyond geographical locales and frontiers—more so perhaps in the age of globalization.

It is hoped that the great thinkers and leaders of humanity make it a part of their agenda and commitment to narrow down the distances and divides between the intellectual and cultural traditions of the world and aspire them to the veritable vision of a shared destiny and wider human fraternity in their deliberations.

Mohammad Hashim Kamali[36]

PREVIEW *BOOK YEAR 4*

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think, which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

The Lessons in *Book Year 1* through *Book Year 24*, including *Book Year 4* presented here, are numbered consecutively in order of the revelation of a Quranic chapter. Here, in *Book Year 4*, we begin with a Prelude based on 26:214 when the Prophet is commanded to *stand up and warn* his nearest of kin. A dinner is organized for them. The lessons themselves begin with Lesson 39, that is, Quran Chapter 7 is the 39th Chapter revealed, followed by Quranic Chapters 72, 36 and, finally, Chapter 25, the 42nd Chapter revealed.

The chronological order of the chapters of the Quran that follow throughout the series is based on the list accepted by al-Azhar University in Cairo and is considered to be the official order. It differs greatly from the chronological order developed by Western scholars over the centuries and is much more detailed.

Quranic signs or verses (*ayat*) of each section (*ruku*) in a particular Quranic chapter are given in each lesson followed by a commentary, an analysis of the signs that answer three questions: Who is God?, How are the signs directed towards Prophet Muhammad? and How are the signs directed towards the Community? Following these questions, there is a section called Example of How Critical Thinking works. A short paragraph describes the Eight Elements of Reason and then a paragraph titled Example of How Quranic Critical Thinking Works. The paragraph that comes after this is for the student to determine which of the statements are one of the Eight Elements of Reasoning. Each Lesson ends with a Student Self-assessment.

We do not have a great deal of detailed information about the life of the Prophet Muhammad during the Makkah period. The information that we have falls in the various lessons while the information related to the chapters (*ayat*) and sections (*ruku*) can be found in Appendix 1. Here the list of Muhammad's early Companions appear, the names of some who do not appear in Ibn Ishaq or Ibn Hisham but have been recorded by other early scholars. We will hear of some of them who played significant roles in the future development of the community (*ummah*). Appendix 2 correlates the original Quranic chapters with their chronological order.

PRELUDE: THE DINNER

With the revelation of Chapter 26 verse 214, Muhammad has been commanded to *stand up and warn* his nearest of kin. He has to first invite his kin because internal reform precedes all other reform. Also, if he succeeds in his invitation to his kinsmen, the call to strangers will be easier. As a result, the faith of his kinsmen can become a line of defense against the insults of the enemies. It will also have the advantage that if they accept faith in complete sincerity, they will, at least, because of kinship, defend him and protect his life from his enemies.

Who are the near of kin to the Messenger? There is his uncle Abbas and his cousin Hamza, a young, fearless man of great strength. The eldest of them all is Abu Talib, the Messenger's guardian, the most respected man among the Quraysh and head of the Hashim Clan. He is a kind and honorable man and has a special affection for Muhammad who had grown up in his home. Abu Talib continues to protect him against the Quraysh. Then there is Abu Lahab, who, together with his wife, the sister of Abu Sufyan, is the most vicious enemies of the Messenger.

The Messenger must begin his invitation with them. He invites some forty or forty-five people from the Hashim Clan to his home. He begins to speak to familiarize them with the Quranic message, but in the midst of his words, Abu Lahab interrupts him, crying out: Muhammad is a madman!

He does not allow the Messenger to continue. The Messenger decides the moment is not right. Once again he invites his family, except Abu Lahab, to dinner. After dinner, the Messenger explains that a guide never lies to his kin, that there is no god but God, that he is the Messenger of God to individuals there and the general public, as well, and says: O my kin, you will die like those who sleep, and, like them, will be awakened and become alive. Every person will be rewarded or punished according to his own deeds. This is God's eternal paradise for those who do good deeds and eternal hell is for those who do evil deeds. No one has ever brought anything better than what I am offering you. I bring you good news. My God commands me to invite all of you towards Him. Whosoever from among you helps me in this invitation and movement and supports me will be my brother and successor among you.

No one among his kin who had not as yet accepted the Quranic message to join him at this meeting.

> Ibn Ishaq: People begin to accept the Quranic message, both men and women, in large numbers until the fame of it spreads throughout Makkah, and it begins to be talked about. Then God commands Muhammad to declare the truth of what he has received and to make known His commands to the people and to call them to Him. It is about three years from the time of the beginning of the revelation until God commands the Messenger to publish his religion to the

public, according to information that has reached me. Then God says: *And warn your nearest kin, the kinspeople.* (26:214)

When this sign is revealed to the Messenger, he called me (Ali ibn Abi Talib) and said: God has ordered me to warn my family, my nearest relations and the task is beyond my strength. I know that when I make this message known to them, I will meet with great unpleasantness so I have remained silent until Gabriel has come to me with the sign.

So prepare some food with a leg of mutton and fill a pitcher with milk. Then gather together the sons of Abd al-Muttalib so that I can address them and tell them what I have been commanded to say.

I do what he ordered and summoned them. There are at that time forty men more or less including his uncles Abu Talib, Hamza, al-Abbas and Abu Lahab. When they had assembled he told me to bring in the food that I had prepared for them. When I produced it, the Messenger said to his relatives: Take it in the name of God.

The men ate until they could eat no more. All I could see (in the dish) was the place where their fingers had been. And as sure as I live if there had been only one man, he could have eaten what I put before the lot of them.

Then he said: Give the people to drink. I brought them the cup and they drank until they were all satisfied, and as sure as I live if there had been, only one man he could have drunk that amount.

When the Messenger wanted to address them, Abu Lahab got up first and said: Your host has bewitched you.

They dispersed before the Messenger could address them.

On the morrow he said to me: This man spoke before I could, and the people dispersed before I could address them, so do exactly as you did yesterday.

Everything went as before and then the Messenger said: O Clans of Abd al-Muttalib, I know of no Arab who has come to his people with a nobler message than mine. I have brought you the best of this world and the next. God has ordered me to call you to Him. So which of you will co-operate with me in this matter, my brother, my executor, and my successor being among you?

The men remained silent and I, though the youngest, said: O Messenger of God, I will be your helper in this matter.

He laid his hand on the back of my neck and said: This is my brother, my executor, and my successor among you. Hearken to him and obey him.

The men got up laughing and saying to Abu Talib: He has ordered you to listen to your son and obey him![1]

LESSON 39(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
NOTING SIGNIFICANT SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

Quranic critical thinkers try to treat things that are similar in a similar way and things that are different in a different way. Uncritical thinkers tend not to see the significant similarities and differences. It often is the case that things that appear to be superficially similar are often significantly different and things that appear to be superficially different are often essentially the same.

It takes practice to be able to distinguish between the two. As this sensitivity develops, it influences how you experience, how you describe, how you categorize, and how you reason about things. You become more careful and discriminating in your use of words and phrases. You recognize the purposes of the comparisons you make. You recognize that purposes govern the act of comparing and determine its scope and limits.

We all have actions or deeds by which we will be judged. In this we are similar. Our difference lies in the weight of our deeds. Those whose scale weighs heavy with good deeds on the Day of Judgment will prosper. Those whose scale weighs light with good deeds will have *lost their souls.* (7:9)

QURANIC CHAPTER 7: THE ELEVATED PLACES (AL-ARAF)
SIGNS 7:1-7:10

Makkah: *Alif Lam Mim Saad.* (7:1)
*It is a Book that was caused to descend to **you**.*
*So let there be no impediment in **your** breast about it*
*so that **you** will warn with it*
and as a reminder to the ones who believe. (7:2)
Follow what was caused to descend to you from your Lord
and follow not protectors other than He.
Little you recollect! (7:3)
And how many towns We caused to perish!
And Our might drew near them at night
or when they were ones who sleep at noon! (7:4)
Then, there had been no calling out
when Our might drew near to them,
but that they said:
Truly, we had been ones who are unjust. (7:5)
Then, We will, certainly, ask those
to whom were sent Messengers to them
and We will, certainly, ask the ones who are sent. (7:6)
Then, We will relate to them with knowledge
for We had never been of ones who are absent. (7:7)

The weighing of deeds on that Day will be The Truth.
So ones whose balance was heavy from good deeds,
then, those, they are the ones who prosper. (7:8)
And ones whose balance was made light from bad deeds
those are those who have lost their souls because
they had been doing wrong with Our signs. (7:9)
And, certainly, We established you firmly on the earth
and We made for you in it a livelihood.
But little you give thanks! (7:10)[2]

COMMENTARY°

THE JOURNEY

The journey we take, representing our life on earth, is thus portrayed in a quick image. When those of us who suffered God's punishment in this life are brought in front of God for questioning, their confession made at the time when they were destroyed in this world is not sufficient. They have to face a new line of questioning which makes their wrongdoing known to all generations of humanity who are gathered together on that great day: *Then, We will, certainly, ask those to whom were sent Messengers to them and We will, certainly, ask the ones who are sent. Then, We will relate to them with knowledge for We had never been of ones who are absent.* (7:6-7:7)

The Prophet, the one who was to deliver the Quranic message for the first time, receives the directive to confront the state of ignorance, or tribal honor, prevailing in Arabia. *It is a Book that was caused to descend to* ***you****. So let there be no impediment in your breast about it so that you will warn with it and as a reminder to the ones who believe.* (7:2) It should be noted here that when the Prophet was addressed in person, the book is described as having been sent down to him personally and the second person singular is used as indicated by **you, your**. (7:2)

At the same time, when all humanity is addressed, the book is described as having been sent down to them from their Lord: *Follow what was caused to descend to you from your Lord and follow not protectors other than He. Little you recollect!* and the second person plural is used as indicated by "you." (7:3) In the case of the Prophet, the message is revealed to him so that he believes in it and warns people and reminds them with its message. In the case of other human beings, the message is revealed for them so that they believe in it and follow it to the exclusion of any other source.

The task is great. It aims to bring about a total change in human communities, encompassing their concepts, ideals, values, moral

standards, traditions, social systems, economic set-ups as well as their relationships with God, the universe and other human beings. Therefore, the section seeks to strongly shake people's consciences so that they wake up to the task and start examining their situation. This is achieved by portraying the destinies of past communities who denied the divine message, how they were destroyed in this life and the sort of destiny awaiting them in the life to come. *The weighing of deeds on that Day will be The Truth. So ones whose balance was heavy from good deeds, then, those, they are the ones who prosper. And ones whose balance was made light from bad deeds those are those who have lost their souls because they had been doing wrong with Our signs.* (7:8-7:9)

Numerous have been those communities which were destroyed because of their rejection of the message of the truth. Invariably, they were taken unawares, either in the dead of the night or at midday when people relax and sleep, feeling a sense of security: *And how many towns We caused to perish! And Our might drew near them at night or when they were ones who sleep at noon!* (7:4).

What happened then? Those people who were taken unaware could do nothing other than to own up to their situation and confess to the attitude they had taken: *Then, there had been no calling out when Our might drew near to them, but that they said: Truly, we had been ones who are unjust.* (7:5)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 7:1-7:10

WHO IS GOD?

It is God who caused the Book to descend to Prophet Muhammad so that he may warn with it. God has caused many towns to perish. On the Day of Judgment, God will ask the Messengers who were sent to the various communities about their communities. God established the community firmly on the earth and made a livelihood for it.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quranic message says that the Quran was caused to descend to "**you**," Muhammad so that there be no impediment in **your** breast about it and so that **you** warn with it. It is a *reminder to the ones who believe.*

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

Here in the 39th Chapter to be revealed is the first mention of *the ones who believe*. They, that is, the community of believers are reprimanded with *little you recollect!* in following what was caused to descend them from their Lord. For those who are ungrateful, when God's might grows near to them,

they will say: *We had been ones who are unjust.* Deeds and actions will be weighed on that Day. The ones who will prosper are the ones whose balance is heavy from good deeds. The ones who balance is light are the ones who have lost their souls because they did wrong with God's signs. Then, again, God reprimands the community saying: *Little do you give thanks*, reminding it of the importance of gratitude.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message is revealed to Prophet Muhammad. Why was the Quran caused to descend to Prophet Muhammad? The Prophet will warn and remind. The Prophet did not make-up the Quran himself. It was revealed by God to him. God is always present. One needs to make sure one's scale on the Day of Judgment weighs heavy with good deeds.The Prophet will reveal to others exactly what was revealed to him.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I am able to raise basic issues.
I am probing beneath the surface of things.
I am discovering the structure of my own thought.

LESSON 39(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY UTILIZING CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS, PRINCIPLES AND MODELS

What is a concept? A concept is an idea or thought, especially a generalized idea of a thing or of a class of things. The Quranic text expresses clusters of concepts or ideas. It is these concepts that it uses that students need to learn to identify, contrast them with other of its concepts and clarify what they mean and what students include and exclude because of them. Quranic clusters of concepts include, for example, types of people: believer-disbelievers-ungrateful-hypocrites, living-creation; false-deity concept; sacred text concept. The latter, sacred text concept includes four concepts: The Quran itself, the Gospel, the Torah (the first five books of the Bible also known as the Pentateuch revealed to Moses), and the Psalms.

FIVE STRATEGIES FOR LEARNING TO UTILIZE CONCEPTS, ETC.

The following are five strategies specific to this element of reasoning. The five strategies are:

Comparing Analogous Situations: Reframe Insights to New Contexts
Developing One's Perspective: Creating or Exploring Arguments
Making Interdisciplinary Connections
Comparing and Contrasting Ideals with Actual Practice
Thinking Precisely About Thinking: Using Critical Vocabulary

QURANIC CHAPTER 7: THE ELEVATED PLACES (AL-ARAF)

SIGNS 7:11-7:25

Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (7:11)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (7:12)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (7:13)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (7:14)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (7:15)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (7:16)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (7:17)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (7:18)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (7:19)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (7:20)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (7:21)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (7:22)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (7:23)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (7:24)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam and Iblis (7:25)

Quranic Chapter 7: The Elevated Places (al-Araf)
Signs 7:26-7:31

O Children of Adam! Surely, We caused to descend to you
garments to cover up your intimate parts and finery,
but the garment of God-consciousness, that is better.
That is of the signs of God
so that perhaps they will recollect! (7:26)
O Children of Adam! Let not Satan tempt you
as he drove your parents out of the Garden,
tearing off their garments from both of them
to cause them to see their intimate parts.
Truly, he and his type sees you whereas you see them not.
Truly, We made he and the satans protectors
of those who believe not. (7:27)
And when they committed an indecency, they said:
We found our fathers on it and God commanded us in it.
Say: Truly, God commands not depravities.
Say you about God what you know not? (7:28)
Say: My Lord commanded me to justice.
And set your faces at every place of prostration
and call to Him ones who are sincere and devoted
in the way of life to Him.
As He began you, you will revert to Him. (7:29)
He guided a group of people
and a group of people realized their fallacy.
Truly, they took satans to themselves as protectors instead of God
and they assume that they are ones who are truly guided. (7:30)
O Children of Adam! Take your adornment
at every place of prostration.
And eat and drink, but exceed not all bounds.
Truly, He loves not the ones who are excessive.(7:31)

Commentary°

This passage provides a pause for comment. It is a long pause after the first scene in the great story of humanity. A similar pause is made at the end of every stage, as if we are told: let us stop here to reflect on the lessons of the previous epoch before we go further on our unique journey. This pause comes at the beginning of the battle which is about to rage between Satan and the human being. It is meant as a warning against Satan's schemes and exposes the numer-

ous ways and fashions his scheming may take. But the Quran does not issue any directive unless it is needed to face a practical situation, and does not relate a story unless it is relevant to the day-to-day life of the Islamic movement. It does not relate a story for the sake of literary enjoyment, and does not state a fact only to place it in a theoretical context. The Quran is serious and practical, and its statements and directives are meant only to deal with realities which the Islamic movement may have to face.

This comment on the story of the fall of human beings from heaven is given here by way of facing up to the Arabian *jahiliyyah* when, prior to the advent of Islam, the Quraysh leaders from the major tribe in Arabia, had claimed for itself certain rights against the unbelievers of the rest of Arabia who went to Makkah for pilgrimage and paid homage to the idols which were placed in the Kabah. The Quraysh based its claims on concepts which it alleged to be part of the divine faith.

It formulated these in laws, claiming them to be part of the divine law. How else could the Quraysh have won acceptance to its claim by the rest of Arabia? It had to resort to the same tactics followed by priests, chiefs and leaders in every ignorant community. The Quraysh gave itself a special name, al-Hums, and claimed for itself special privileges, some of which relate to the ritual of *tawaf* which takes the form of circumambulating or walking round the Kabah, the first house ever to be dedicated for worshipping God.

They claimed that al-Hums, or the Qurayshis, were the only people to have the privilege of doing *tawaf* wearing ordinary clothes. The rest of the Arabs could not do *tawaf* wearing clothes that had previously been worn. Instead, they had to borrow clothes from al-Hums people, or wear brand new clothing. Otherwise, they had to do *tawaf* in the nude, even though they had their women with them. In his commentary on the Quran, Ibn Kathir states:

The Arabs, other than the Quraysh, did not do *tawaf* around the Kabah wearing clothes that they had already used. Their argument was that they could not do *tawaf* wearing clothes that they had worn when committing disobedience to God. The Quraysh, who called themselves al-Hums, were the only ones to wear their ordinary garments when they did *tawaf*. If anyone was able to borrow a garment from a Qurayshi man, he could use it for *tawaf*. Anyone who had a brand new garment could also use it in *tawaf*, provided that he threw it away on finishing his ritual and that no one else used it afterwards. Otherwise, he had to do *tawaf* naked. Even women were naked when they did *tawaf*, but they could partially cover their private parts. However, women mostly did *tawaf* at night.[3]

This was something they invented, following the footsteps of their fathers, and believing that what their fathers did was based on divine orders. God reproached them for that, saying: *When they committed an indecency, they said: We found our fathers on it.* (7:28) In reply God tells His Messenger, Muhammad, to answer their claims by saying: *Say: Truly, God commands not depravities.* (7:28) Thus, their practice is condemned in the Quran as unacceptable indecency. God would never enjoin anything like that: *Say you about God what you do not know?* Would you allege that God has said something when you do not know it to be correct?

God also instructs His Messenger to tell his people that He only orders justice, the maintaining of the right path and sincere devotion: *Say: My Lord commanded me to justice. And set your faces at every place of prostration and call to Him ones who are sincere and devoted in the way of life* (religion) *to Him.* (7:29) That is to say that wherever you wish to worship God, you have to be sincere in your worship, following in the footsteps of messengers to whom God gave miracles to endorse what they gave you. Moreover, you have to be truly sincere in your worship, because God does not accept any action unless it combines these two essentials: that it is in line with His way of life and dedicated purely to Him alone.

To deal with this practical state of ignorance and its manifestations in the shape of regulations for worship, *tawaf* and dress, as well as similar traditions concerning food, and all that is claimed to be part of God's law, the Quran gives these comments on the first stage in the life of humanity. This stage involves the permission to eat of the fruit of the garden of heaven, except for what God has forbidden, and mentions a person's need to have clothes.

O Children of Adam! Surely We caused to descend to you garments to cover up your intimate parts and finery, but the garment of God-consciousness, that is better. That is of the signs of God so that perhaps they will recollect! (7:26) This address contrasts with the scene of exposed nakedness and the patching up of leaves from the garden to cover that nakedness. That exposure came as a result of disobeying an express order given by God and eating something He had forbidden.

This is what God has enjoined. (7:29) It runs opposite to their practices in which they follow their fathers. In the end they come back to their different destinations: *He guided a group of people and a group of people realized their fallacy. Truly, they took satans to themselves as protectors instead of God and they assume that they are ones who are truly guided.* (7:30)

Thus, any Arab who did not have a friend in Makkah to lend

him a garment, or did not have the money to hire such a garment, faced the choice of either doing *tawaf* naked or wearing his own clothes which he must throw away after he completed his *tawaf*. No one else was allowed to touch those clothes after they had been thrown away. Such clothes were considered as discarded clothes.

In his commentary, al-Qurturbi, a famous scholar, says: It has been reported that in pre-Islamic days, the Arabs used not to eat any rich food during their pilgrimage, limiting themselves only to eating very little, and they used to do *tawaf* naked. The Quran tells them: Dress well when you attend any place of worship. *Eat and drink, but exceed not all bounds. Truly, He loves not the ones who are excessive.* (7:31)

SUMMARY OF QURANIC SIGNS 7:26-7:31

WHO IS GOD?

God caused materials for garments to be made and worn to cover over intimate parts. God made Satan the protector of those who believe not. God commends the Prophet to be fair and just.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

Say: Truly, God commands not depravities. Say you about God what you know not? (7:28) *Say: My Lord commanded me to justice.*

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

O Children of Adam! Let not Satan tempt you as he drove your parents out of the Garden, tearing off their garments from both of them to cause them to see their intimate parts. Truly, he and his type sees you whereas you see them not. Truly, We made he and the satans protectors of those who believe not. (7:27) *And when they committed an indecency, they said: We found our fathers on it and God commanded us in it. And set your faces at every place of prostration and call to Him ones who are sincere and devoted in the way of life to Him. As He began you, you will revert to Him.* (7:29) *He guided a group of people and a group of people realized their fallacy. Truly, they took satans to themselves as protectors instead of God and they assume that they are ones who are truly guided.* (7:30) *O Children of Adam! Take your adornment at every place of prostration. And eat and drink, but exceed not all bounds. Truly, He loves not the ones who are excessive.*(7:31)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts**

(vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message states that God does not love the ones who are excessive. What does it mean "to be excessive?" There are those who exceed all bounds or limits in what they eat or drink. The result is that according to the Quran, they are among "the excessive" who are unjust to themselves whereas the Prophet was commanded to justice. Excessiveness includes our over-eating, drinking and in the very clothes we choose to wear. It may be that this leads us to excessive behavior and we would lose God's love.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I am developing sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
I am arriving at judgments through my own reasoning.
I am learning to listen carefully to what others in my class say.

LESSON 39(3). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY COMPARING ANALOGOUS SITUATIONS: REFRAME INSIGHTS TO NEW CONTEXTS

In comparing analogous situations and transferring insights to new contexts, the example of the pilgrimage to Makkah and the Kabah comes to mind. The Arabs had been practicing the pilgrimage for centuries. While the pilgrimage had been originally established by Abraham and his son, Ishmael for the worship of the One God, over time, the beliefs changed. People would still perform the pilgrimage to Makkah and the Kabah, but now the Kabah was filled with idols whom they worshipped. It became their custom to circumambulate the Kabah naked as we learned in the previous lesson.

The Traditions of the Prophet (*ahadith*), so important in Islam, consist of the words which he spoke, the laws he brought, the deeds he performed, things he remained silent about or did not disagree with and deeds he actually performed in his lifetime without telling others that they should themselves perform them. The Traditions of the Prophet, then, are his words and his conduct. An important part of these is a particular method called "reframing" as the following examples show.

> The Prophet preserved the form, the container of a custom which had deep roots in society, one which people had gotten used to from generation to generation and one which was practiced in a natural manner, but he changed the contents, the spirit, the direction and the practical application of customs in a revolutionary, decisive and immediate manner.
>
> He was inspired by a particular method which he uses in social combat. Without producing negative results, without containing any of the weak points of the other methods, his method contained the positive characteristics of the others. Through the customs of society which apply the brakes, he quickly attained his social goals. His revolutionary method was this: he maintained the container of a social tradition but inwardly changed the contents.
>
> He used this method in reconciling social phenomena. He adopted a process and method which is a model for all problem solving. This method can be applied to two problems or two phenomena which in no way resemble each other.
>
> Before Islam, the pilgrimage was an Arab custom, full of superstitious ancestor worship. It was a glorified type of idol worship, holding economic advantage for the Quraysh tribe. It had gradually come to assume this form from the time of Abraham. Islam kept the pre-Islamic custom of pilgrimage, believing that Abraham, the Friend of God, had built the Kabah as a place to worship the One God, but which, after a period of decline, had been filled with idols.

The basis of the pilgrimage had been twofold: to protect the economic interests of the Quraysh merchants in Makkah and to create an artificial need among the Arab tribes for the Quraysh nobility.

Before Islam, there was a custom of total ablution that was both a belief and a superstition. The pre-Islamic Arabs believed that when a person had sexual intercourse, he or she incarnated jinn (spirits which inhabit the earth), thereby rendering both body and soul unclean. Until he or she found water and performed a total ablution, the jinn could not be exorcised.

Another example is the pilgrimage to Makkah. Before Islam, it was an Arab custom, full of superstitious ancestor worship. It was a glorified type of idol worship, holding economic advantage for the Quraysh tribe whereby the Kabah was filled with idols that were worshiped by the people. It had gradually come to assume this form from the time of Abraham. The Prophet was commanded to keep the form of the pre-Islamic custom of pilgrimage, as Abraham, the Friend of God, had built the Kabah for the worship of the One God, but through God's guidance, he changed the content. Now the pilgrimage was practiced to worship the One God.

It was revealed to the Prophet of Islam to take this form and change it into a most beautiful and deep rite founded upon the unity of God and the oneness of humanity.

The Prophet, with his revolutionary stand, took the pilgrimage of the idol-worshipping tribes and changed it into a completely opposite rite. It was a revolutionary leap. As a result, while the Quraysh leaders opposed him because of their concern that they would lose their means of income, the Arab people underwent no anguish, no loss of values or beliefs, but rather, revived the truth and cleansed an ancient custom. They moved easily from idol worship to unity. Suddenly, they had left the past. Their society was not aware that the foundations of idol worship had been torn down. This leap, this revolutionary social method found within the (Quranic Sunnah) of the Prophet preserved the outer form, but changed its content. It maintained the container as a permanent element but changed and transformed the content. The Prophet, through the inspired method of his work, showed us that if we understand and can put his method into action, we can behave in a most enlightened and correct way.

A clear-visioned intellectual, confronted by outdated customs, ancient traditions, a dead culture and a stagnant religious and social order, takes up the mandate of the Prophet rather than submit to prejudices from the past. By this method one can reach revolutionary goals without the danger of revolution, on one hand, and without opposing the basis of faith and ancient social values on the other. By

doing so, one does not remove oneself from people, nor does one become a stranger on whom people may turn and condemn. This method works because the Prophet received knowledge from the divine Infinite, because he asked for the help of revelation and because he made use of what he received.[4]

QURANIC CHAPTER 7: THE ELEVATED PLACES (AL-ARAF)
SIGNS 7:32-7:39

Say: Who forbade the adornment of God
which He brought out for His servants?
And what is the good of His provision?
Say: They are exclusively (for them) *on the Day of Resurrection*
for those who believed during this present life .
Thus, We explain distinctly
the signs for a folk who know. (7:32)[5]
Say: My Lord forbade not but indecencies—
what was manifest or what was inward—
and sins and unrightful insolence,
to ascribe partners with God
when He sends not down for it any authority
and that you say about God
what you know not. (7:33)
And for every community there is a term.
And when their term drew near,
they will not delay it by an hour,
nor press it forward. (7:34)
O Children of Adam! If Messengers
from among you approach
relating My signs to you,
then, whoever was God-conscious
and made things right,
then, there will be neither fear in them
nor will they feel remorse. (7:35)
But those who denied Our signs
and grew arrogant against them,
those are the Companions of the Fire;
they are ones who will dwell in it forever. (7:36)
Then, who does greater wrong
than he who devised a lie against God
or denied His signs?
Those, they will attain their share from the Book.
Until Our Messengers drew near

to gather them to themselves,
they will say:
Where are who you had been calling on other than God?
They will say: They went astray from us.
And they bore witness against themselves
that, truly, they had been ones who are ungrateful. (7:37)
He will say: Enter among the communities
that passed away before you of jinn
and humankind into the fire.
Every time a community entered,
it would curse its sister community
until when they will come successively in it altogether.
The last of them would say to the first of them:
Our Lord! These caused us to go astray
so give them a double punishment of the fire.
He will say: For everyone it is double
except you know not. (7:38)
And the first of them would say to the last of them:
You have had no superiority over us
so experience the punishment
for what you had been earning. (7:39)

COMMENTARY°

Thus, the idolatrous leaders assume for themselves the authority to pronounce certain types of dress and food as lawful or forbidden. (7:32) When all their claims have been refuted, the section reiterates what God has actually forbidden: *Say: My Lord forbade not but indecencies—what was manifest or what was inward—and sins and unrightful insolence, to ascribe partners with God when He sends not down for it any authority and that you say about God what you know not.* (7:33)

Humanity must follow the messengers who bring them revelations from their Lord. It is on the basis of their response to those messengers that accountability and reward on the Day of Judgment will be determined. *O Children of Adam! If Messengers from among you approach relating My signs to you, then, whoever was God-conscious and made things right, then, there will be neither fear in them nor will they feel remorse. But those who denied Our signs and grew arrogant against them, those are the Companions of the Fire; they are ones who will dwell in it forever.* (7:35-7:36).

God-consciousness helps us steer away from sin and indecency. Indeed, the most wicked aspect of gross indecency is to associate partners with God and to claim for oneself God's authority. God-con-

sciousness also helps us maintain the path of obedience and to do only what is right. Thus, it brings a sense of security which is totally free from worry about one's eventual destiny: *But those who denied Our signs and grew arrogant against them, those are the Companions of the Fire; they are ones who will dwell in it forever.* (7:36)

The section moves on to portray the scene of approaching death: *And for every community there is a term. And when their term drew near, they will not delay it by an hour, nor press it forward.* (7:34)

The section does not stop at calling on people to dress well when they attend to any act of worship or to enjoy wholesome food and elegant dress. It disapproves of the prohibitions of such adornment which God has provided for His servants as well as the prohibition of wholesome provisions. The authority to prohibit anything belongs only to God who has given us the details of what He has forbidden and what He has made lawful He has enacted for human life. *Say: Who forbade the adornment of God which He brought out for His servants. And what is the good of His provision? Say: They are for those who believed in this present life and, exclusively* (for them) *on the Day of Resurrection. Thus, We explain distinctly the signs for a folk who know.* (7:32)

This clear disapproval is followed by a statement making clear that such adornment and means of sustenance are for the enjoyment of believers on account of their belief in God, their Lord, who has produced them for the believers. If such matters are also made available in this life to the ungrateful, they will be reserved exclusively for believers on the Day of Resurrection. The ungrateful will have no share in them. (7:32).

God has certainly forbidden neither what is reasonable of adornment and clothing nor wholesome food and drink. What He has truly forbidden is what those ungrateful used to practice: (7:33)

A most amazing example of the reaction of the ungrateful who were the first to be addressed by these signs, considering the denunciation of their false prohibitions, is given by al-Kalbi, a renowned scholar in the early generations: When Muslims circumambulated the Kabah wearing their clothes, the ungrateful criticized their action and ridiculed them. This sign was then revealed to answer their ridicules.

The question that arises here concerns the link between such nakedness, twisted logic, overweening arrogance by associating partners with God and accepting laws from deities other than God.

Those pagan Arabs received their notions concerning their nakedness from false lords who were able to fool them and manipulate their ignorance to ensure their supremacy in Arabia remained

unchallenged. Other ancient tribal honor societies followed the same pattern and received their notions from their priests and chiefs. The same applies to the ungrateful of today who cannot challenge the concepts that false lords are keen to establish.

This: *Then, who does greater wrong than he who devised a lie against God or denied His signs? Those, they will attain their share from the Book. Until Our Messengers drew near to gather them to themselves, they will say: Where are who you had been calling on other than God? They will say: They went astray from us. And they bore witness against themselves that, truly, they had been ones who are ungrateful* (7:37) is the same attitude described earlier in the section showing their reaction at the time when God's might overwhelms them in this life. Their reply then was a clear acknowledgement of being in the wrong: *Then, there had been no calling out when Our might drew near to them, but that they said: Truly, we had been ones who are unjust.* (7:5).

[God] will say: *Enter among the communities that passed away before you of jinn and humankind into the fire. Every time a community entered, it would curse its sister community until when they will come successively in it altogether. The last of them would say to the first of them: Our Lord! These caused us to go astray so give them a double punishment of the fire. He will say: For everyone it is double except you know not. And the first of them would say to the last of them: You have had no superiority over us so experience the punishment for what you had been earning.* (7:38-39)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 7:32-7:39

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

Prophet Muhammad is told to say: Who forbade the adornment of God that He revealed for His servants and what is good of His provision? Say: That which is good and the provisions are for those who believed in the present life and, exclusively for them on the Day of Resurrection. Say: My Lord forbade indecencies—outer or inner—and sins and show unrightful insolence by ascribing partners with God when He has not sent down any authority for that and that you say about God what you know not. Tell them that for every community there is a term and when their term drew near, they will not delay it by an hour nor press it forward.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

God has sent Messengers who relate His signs to the community. For those who are God-conscious and made things right, there they will have neither fear nor remorse. As for the ungrateful, the Quranic message asks: Who does greater wrong than he who devised a lie against God or denied His signs?

When the angels gather them to themselves, the angels will ask: *Where are who you had been calling on other than God*? The ungrateful will reply: They left us. In this way, the ungrateful will bear witness against themselves.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

One of the Quranic messages here is to follow these signs showing that which God forbids. What is it that God forbids in these signs? There are those who forbade adornment and provision that God did not forbid. What God does forbid are indecency, inner or outer, sins and the insolence of ascribing partners with God. One should only avoid doing what God enjoins that it not be done. Do not forbid what God has not forbidden. These are what God has forbidden and not those who say things about God who know not. We take for granted that there are those who say things about God for which God has not sent down any authority.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I am beginning to look for reasons and evidence.
I am recognizing and reflecting on assumptions.
I am seeking examples, analogies and objections.

LESSON 39(4). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY DEVELOPING ONE'S PERSPECTIVE: CREATING OR EXPLORING ARGUMENTS

HOW DO I CREATE OR EXPLORE ARGUMENTS BY DEVELOPING MY PERSPECTIVE?

Uncritical thinkers who exhibit selfishness similar to the people around Prophet Abraham tended to assume that their own view of things was the only correct way to see the world. They tried to manipulate the views of others to their own advantage.

Fair-minded Quranic thinkers like Prophet Abraham recognized that his own way of thinking and interpreting the world around him required insight and experience through trial and error. He went through a critical analysis of his experience. He questioned the commonly held belief of the people around him. For his part, he explored his own beliefs and his own reasoning and theories. This was essential to his thinking and behavior. Once he experienced this, he was certain of his perspectives and could speak about them with deep insight.

WHAT EXAMPLE CAN YOU GIVE OF A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF AN EXPERIENCE OF YOURS?

Learn to take interdisciplinary philosophical, socio-political, scientific and Quranic concepts and opinions, considering them from various angles and points of view without ignoring anything and then examine them carefully, try to arrive at logical conclusions and put aside all that fails in its logic as Prophet Abraham did. Your perspectives are developed through extended thought, discussion, and writing. You who are unsure what to think can be given time to reflect and come to tentative conclusions. You who have definite conclusions about the subject at hand can consider ideas from other perspectives, answer questions about what you think, or reflect on new situations or problems. You can compare what you say you believe with how you act. You can raise basic and important questions about what you learn, discovering and discussing underlying principles in your thought.

One-to-one questioning may facilitate development of perspective, especially for those who think they have exhausted their ideas. This strategy will also often coincide with evaluating actions and policies, arguments, or assumptions. You could explain how what you have learned from the Quranic signs has changed your thinking in some way. During classroom discussions, you should raise points made during study. You should relate your general ideas to specifics you have studied, explore important questions, and integrate the Quranic details.

Quranic Chapter 7: The Elevated Places (al-Araf)
Signs 7:40-7:47

Makkah: *Truly, those who denied Our signs*
and grew arrogant among them,
the doors of heaven will not be opened up to them
nor will they enter the Garden
until a he-camel penetrates through the eye of the needle.
And, thus, We give recompense to the ones who sin. (7:40)
For them hell will be their cradling
and above them, the overwhelming event.
Thus, We give recompense to the ones who are unjust. (7:41)
But for those who believed
and did as the ones in accord with morality,
We place no burden on any soul beyond its capacity.
Those will be the Companions of the Garden.
They are ones who will dwell in it forever. (7:42)
And We will draw out what was in their breasts of grudges.
And rivers will run beneath them.
And they will say: The Praise belongs to God
Who truly guided us to this!
And we would not have been guided if God guided us not.
Certainly, the Messengers of our Lord
drew near us with The Truth.
And it was proclaimed to them that this,
the Garden, was given to you as inheritance
for what you had been doing. (7:43)
And the Companions of the Garden would cry out
to the Companions of the Fire:
Surely, we found what our Lord promised us to be true.
Found you not what your Lord promised to be true?
They would say: Yes.
Then, it will be announced
by one who announces among them:
May the curse of God be on the ones who are unjust, (7:44)
those who bar the way of God and who desire it to be crooked.
And in the world to come
they will be ones who are ungrateful. (7:45)
And between them both is a partition.
And on the Elevated Places will be men
who recognize everyone by their mark.
And they will cry out to the Companions of the Garden that:

Peace be on you.
They enter it not and they are desirous of it. (7:46)
And when their sight would be turned away of its own accord
to the Companions of the Fire,
they will say: Our Lord assign You us not with the folk,
ones who are unjust! (7:47)

COMMENTARY°

The fire is then described: *For them hell will be their cradling and above them, the overwhelming event. Thus, We give recompense to the ones who are unjust.* (7:41). The fire actually engulfs them from above and from beneath. Thus, they have beneath them a raging fire which is sarcastically described as a resting place or a cradle, when it bears nothing of such characteristics. Moreover, from above they have sheets of fire drawn over them. This last description means the criminals and also refers to the ungrateful who deny God's revelations and invent falsehood against God. All these descriptions are synonymous in Quranic usage. (7:42-7:43)

In contrast to the scene of mutual hatred surfacing among the evildoers in hell, even against their former close and intimate friends, we see the believers demonstrating their perfect love for one another in heaven. They are brethren who harbor no ill-feeling to anyone. They enjoy perfect peace and bliss: (7:43)

The contrast between the two groups is total, but the section moves on to raise before our eyes a scene that comes later than the one we have just witnessed. Now we see the people of heaven having settled down comfortably in their dwelling place, while the people of hell are now certain of their doom. The former group calls out to the latter asking them about God's promise: (7:44-7:45)

They greet the people of heaven with the greeting of peace, clearly entertaining hope that God will bestow His mercy on them and admit them to heaven as well. When their eyes fall on the people of the fire, whom they are deliberately made to see, they plead to be spared their destiny. (7:46-7:47)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 7:40-7:47

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

Those who deny the signs and are ungrateful for their blessings will be among the Companions of the Fire.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based

on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message describes the fate of those who deny the signs and those who believe in them from the Quranic message. What is the fate of those who deny the Quranic signs? Heaven will not be opened to them nor will they enter the Garden until a he-camel passes through the eye of a needle. Hell will be their cradling and, above them, the overwhelming event because they had been arrogant and unjust. In order to have heaven opened to one and to have a place in the Garden, one needs to have believed and acted in accord with morality. There is a heaven and there is a hell. Whoever wants heaven and the Garden must believe in the signs and act in accord with morality. There will be a Day of Judgment.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I am seeking examples, analogies and objections.
I am seeking to be empathetic to the Quranic point of view.
I am looking under the surface of things for the meaning of the Quranic message.

LESSON 39(5). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

Quranic knowledge can be divided into multiple categories as this knowledge served as the basis for the development of Islamic sciences over the centuries. There are concepts that are basic to the study of Anthropology, History, Political Science, Mathematics, Logic and so forth. Understanding the interdisciplinary connections of the Quranic sacred text, take relevant concepts, knowledge and insight from the Quranic signs so that you are continuously finding connections between various categories of knowledge whether it be the basic principles of the arts or science. Do not allow the somewhat arbitrary distinctions between academic subjects to control your thinking. When considering issues which transcend subjects, bring relevant concepts, knowledge, and insights from many subjects to the analysis. Make use of insights into one subject to inform your understanding of other subjects. There are always connections between subjects: language and logic; history, geography, psychology, anthropology, physiology; politics, geography, science, ecology; math, science, economics.

INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

Science: In doing research in the sciences, Quranic thinkers record from in depth observation, collecting as much information as possible and then critiquing their analysis of the gathered information so that they can draw the best possible inference through the use of inductive reasoning. *He Who taught by the pen. He taught the human being what he knows not.* (96:4-96:5)

Politics: Quranic thinkers try to obtain their own inferences after listening to .... *what is said and follow the fairer of it. Those are those whom God guided. Those, they are imbued with intuition.* (39:17-39:18) After listening to all opinions, they try to arrive at the best of *the varying opinions as you differ in what (they) say.* (51:8)

Education: Education in schools after listening to .... *what is said and follow the fairer of it* calls on students to learn all types of concepts, faiths and ideas and then choose their own.

Theology: God's Power is directed by His Will which is determined by His Knowledge.

Psychology: Reason (our cognitive system) is the control center for thoughts and it is used to help us regulate our animal soul (*nafs-i ammarah*), that is, our emotions and behavior, by keeping them in a state of equilibrium or moderation in terms of the Straight Path.

Critical thinkers who make interdisciplinary connections consider the created order to be the means through which God manifests multiplicity as so many reflections of Unity. The Quran says: *Nothing is there but its measures are with Us and We send it not down but in a known measure.* (15:21)

This sign refers to every existing thing, that is, that there is nothing that God cannot bring into existence. *His measures* symbolize God's Power and the treasures within them symbolize what is contained within His Power, all of which can be brought into existence by Him easily.

QURANIC CHAPTER 7: THE ELEVATED PLACES (AL-ARAF) SIGNS 7:48-7:53

Makkah: *The Companions of the Elevated Places*
would cry out to men
whom they would recognize by their mark.
They would say: Your amassing availed you not,
nor that you had been growing arrogant. (7:48)
Are these, those about whom you swore an oath
that God would never impart mercy?
Enter the Garden.
There will be neither fear in you
nor will you feel remorse. (7:49)
And the Companions of the Fire would cry out
to the Companions of the Garden:
Pour some water on us,
or some of what God provided you.
They would say: Truly, God forbade them both
to the ones who are ungrateful,(7:50)
those who took their way of life to themselves
as a diversion and as a pastime.
This present life deluded them.
So today We will forget them
as they forgot the meeting of this their Day
and because they had been negating Our signs.(7:51)
And, surely, We brought about a Book to them
in which We explained distinctly, with knowledge,
a guidance and a mercy for a folk who believe. (7:52)
Did they look on for nothing but its interpretation?
The Day its interpretation approaches,
those who forgot it before will say:
Surely, Messengers of our Lord
drew near us with The Truth.
Have we any intercessors who will intercede for us?
Or will we be returned so we do other than what
we had been doing before?

Surely, they lost themselves.
Went astray from them
what they had been devising.(7:53)

COMMENTARY°

The Companions of the Elevated Places then see some leading figures among the wrongdoing people and they recognize them by their features. They rebuke them for what they have been doing: *They would say: Your amassing availed you not, nor that you had been growing arrogant.* (7:48)

You see now that you are in hell, where your armies and great multitude are of no use to you, nor indeed are your arrogance and vain pride. They remind them of what they used to say about the believers in this life, accusing them of being in error and that they would never be granted God's mercy: *Are these, those about whom you swore an oath that God would never impart mercy? Enter the Garden. There will be neither fear in you nor will you feel remorse.* (7:49) Then from the direction of the fire we hear a voice, begging, imploring: *And the Companions of the Fire would cry out to the Companions of the Garden: Pour some water on us, or some of what God provided you. They would say: Truly, God forbade them both to the ones who are ungrateful,* (7:50).

From the other side comes a reproachful reminder in reply: ... *those who took their way of life to themselves as a diversion and as a pastime. This present life deluded them. So today We will forget them as they forgot the meeting of this their Day and because they had been negating Our signs.* (7:51)

All human voices then die down and the Almighty, the Lord of the universe whose rule is final, gives His judgment: *And, surely, We brought about a Book to them in which We explained distinctly, with knowledge, a guidance and a mercy for a folk who believe. Did they look on for nothing but its interpretation? The Day its interpretation approaches, those who forgot it before will say: Surely, Messengers of our Lord drew near us with The Truth. Have we any intercessors who will intercede for us? Or will we be returned so we do other than what we had been doing before? Surely, they lost themselves. Went astray from them what they had been devising.* (7:51-7:53)

SUMMARY OF QURANIC SIGNS 7:48-7:53

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

To not take life as a diversion and as a pastime. Take it seriously because there are consequences for what each person does.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message informs those who take their way of life as a diversion and a pastime, those who were deluded by the present life that they will be among the Companions of the Fire. The Quranic message here asks: Are these, those about whom you swore an oath that God would never impart mercy? Did they, the ungrateful, look on for nothing but its interpretation? The ungrateful themselves will ask: Have we any intercessors who will intercede for us? Or will we be returned so we do other than what he had been doing before? The ungrateful lost their way and went astray. The great regret the ungrateful will have when they face the Judgment. Your wealth will not help you nor an attitude of arrogance. There will be a Day of Judgment.

HELPFUL HINTS ABOUT LEARNING AND STUDYING TECHNIQUES

Your path for most effective learning is through knowing.

Visual/spatial learning
Learning, for visual-spatial learners, takes place all at once.

Learning as a student-athlete or student-performer
Indicators of a "kinesthetic intelligence" or body smarts.
Learning as an adult
Does higher education seem like a foreign culture to you?
Active learning

Active learning is experiential, mindful, and engaging.

Action learning
Action learning is a learning and problem-solving strategy for organizations.

Mathematical language learning strategies
In learning the language of mathematics, we follow the advice that practice make perfect, and patience a helpful virtue.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I followed the guidelines below:

Do your homework!
Read critically; form your own opinions.
Review your notes from the previous lecture and reading for the day.
Communicate immediately with professors about any study problems.

Lesson 39(6). Critical Thinking Strategy
Comparing and Contrasting Ideals with Actual Practice

How do I compare and contrast ideals with actual practice in utilizing Quranic concepts?

Known values of Quranic thinking include self-development (*jihad al-akbar*) and social improvement (*ummah* as a middle community). Both of these require the recognition of gaps between ideals and practice as the gap causes a loss of truth and consistency. This strategy of recognizing the gaps between facts and ideals is connected with developing integrity and good faith.

After the Messenger had been commanded to warn his kin (see Prelude) and as the revelations continued, the time arrives for the Messenger to begin his actual public invitation, the Messenger makes his invitation known in various ways.

It is the custom in Makkah that whenever there is important news for the people, a herald will go through the streets of Makkah calling: *Sabaha*! inviting the people to gather at some point to hear the news. The following day, while he seems pleased with the command to invite his kinsmen to the Quranic message, he leaves his home and climbs the Safa hill. He calls people to hear something important.

The Messenger stands on the Safa hill and calls to the people, saying: O Quraysh! O Quraysh. News passes through the city that the Messenger is standing on the Safa hill and calling to the people. People flock to hear what he has to say. They ask each other: What has happened?

He says: If I were to tell you that an enemy is waiting in ambush behind this mountain would you believe me?

They respond: Yea. We would believe you. No one has ever been able to claim that you lied and you have never lied to us.

Then children of Abu Talib, children of Abdu Manaf! O Zahrah Clan! O Taym Clan! O Makhzum Clan! O Asad Clan, Muhammad calls out, I give you news that a great punishment awaits you. God has appointed me to invite my kin to God-consciousness. I want nothing from you except that you say: There is no god but God.

Quranic Chapter 7: The Elevated Places (al-Araf)
Signs 7:54-7:58

Makkah: *Truly, your Lord is God, He Who created the heavens and the earth in six days.*

Again, He turned His attention to the Throne.
He covers the nighttime with the daytime
that seeks it out urgently.
And the sun and the moon and the stars
are ones caused to be subservient to His command.
Truly, His is not but the creation and the command.
Blessed be God, Lord of the worlds. (7:54)
Call to your Lord humbly and inwardly.
Truly, He loves not the ones who exceed the limits. (7:55)[6]
Make not corruption in the earth
after things were made right
and call to Him with fear and hope.
Truly, the mercy of God is Near
to the ones who are doers of good. (7:56)
And it is He Who sends the winds,
ones that are bearers of good news
before His mercy until when they were charged
with heavy clouds.
We will drive it to a dead land.
Then, We caused water to descend from the cloud and with it
We bring out by water all kinds of fruits.
Thus, We bring out the dead
so that perhaps you will recollect. (7:57)
As for the good land, its plants go forth
with permission of its Lord.
While, as for what was bad, it goes forth not but scantily.
Thus, We diversify the signs for a folk who give thanks. (7:58)

COMMENTARY°

This section calls on human beings to attend to their duties: *Call to your Lord humbly and inwardly. Truly, He loves not the ones who exceed the limits. Make not corruption in the earth after things were made right and call to Him with fear and hope. Truly, the mercy of God is Near to the ones who are doers of good.* (7:55-7:56)

The Quran uses the expression *yawm*, which means 'day', as it speaks of the span of time in which God created the heavens and the earth. (7:54) Their creation was over six such *yawm*. Again, this belongs to the realm that lies beyond the reach of human perception.

Whatever is said about these six days is not based on any certain knowledge. They may be six stages of creation or six epochs, or six of God's days which cannot be measured by our time which is the result of the movement of certain planets and stars. Before these were created, time, as we know it, did not exist. Still, the six days to which

the Quranic sign refers may be something totally different. Therefore, no one may claim that he or she has certain knowledge of what this figure truly means.

Call to Him with fear and hope. (7:56), fearing to incur His anger and punishment, and hoping to earn His pleasure and reward: *Truly, the mercy of God is Near to the ones who are doers of good.* (7:56), who worship God as though they actually see Him. If they do not see him, they are fully aware that He sees them. This is the attitude defined by the Prophet as belonging to the God-conscious.

The idea that we have just discussed speaks of God's grace, and the new scene provides an example of God's grace in action. We see and feel it in the rain that pours down, the growing vegetation and the life that quickens: *And it is He Who sends the winds, ones that are bearers of good news before His mercy until when they were charged with heavy clouds. We will drive it to a dead land. Then, We caused water to descend from the cloud and with it We bring out by water all kinds of fruits. Thus, We bring out the dead so that perhaps you will recollect.* (7:57)

At the end of this journey that encompasses the whole universe and touches on the secrets of existence, the section gives an example of good and evil hearts. But the analogy relies heavily on the scene that has just been portrayed in order to maintain harmony between what we see and what is outlined of different natures: *As for the good land, its plants go forth with permission of its Lord. While, as for what was bad, it goes forth not but scantily. Thus, We diversify the signs for a folk who give thanks.* (7:58)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 7:54-7:58

WHO IS GOD?

God is our Lord who created the heavens and the earth in six days. Then He turned His attention to the Throne. He covers the nighttime with the daytime and the sun and moon and stars are subservient to His command. His is the creation and the command. Blessed by God, Lord of the worlds. The mercy of God is Near for those who do good. It is God who sends the winds and causes water to descend from the clouds bringing out all kinds of fruit so that the human being will recollect. God diversifies the sings for a community that gives thanks.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The community is told: Call to your Lord humbly and inwardly. He loves not the ones who exceed the limits. Do not make corruption in the earth. Call to Him with fear and hope. The mercy of God is Near for those who do good.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The mercy of God is Near the doers of good. Who are the doers of good? Those who call to their Lord humbly and inwardly, who do not exceed the limits and who do not make corruption in the earth after things were made right and who call to Him with fear and hope. In order to have the mercy of God Near, one needs to follow what the Quranic message says. The mercy of God. By doing as the Quranic message states, one brings the mercy of God Near. We take for granted that God is merciful.

QUESTIONS

What ideas or principles does the Quranic message clarify?
What Idea am I using in my thinking?
Is this idea causing problems for me or for others?
What is the main hypothesis I am using in my reasoning?
Am I using this term in keeping with established usage?
What main distinctions should I draw in reasoning through this?
What idea is the sacred text using in its thinking?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I asked myself how I would follow up with the question I asked.
Doing that, I was able to answer what that told me about my question.

LESSON 39(7). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING

HOW DO I LEARN TO THINK PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING USING THE QURANIC CRITICAL VOCABULARY?

An essential requirement of critical thinking is the ability to think about thinking, to engage in what is sometimes called "metacognition." One possible definition of critical thinking is the art of thinking about your thinking while you're thinking in order to make your thinking better: more clear, more accurate, more fair. It is precisely at the level of "thinking about thinking" that most critical thinking stands in contrast to uncritical thinking.

Critical thinkers can analyze thought—take it apart and put it together again. For the uncritical, thoughts are "just there". "I think what I think, don't ask me why." The analytical vocabulary in the English language (such terms as assume, infer, conclude, criteria, point of view: relevance: issue, elaborate, ambiguous, objection, support, bias, justify, perspective, contradiction, consistent, credibility, evidence, interpret, distinguish) enables us to think more precisely about our thinking. We are in a better position to assess reasoning (our own, as well as that of others) when we can use analytic vocabulary with accuracy and ease.

QURANIC EXAMPLES OF THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING

The Quran encourages thinking about thinking (metacognition). God commands us to reflect about something carefully so one may not jump to conclusions without critical insight. *Say: Journey through the earth; then, look on how He began the creation. Again, God will cause the last growth to grow. Truly, God is Powerful over everything.* (29:20)

God directs the attention of people to think by saying: Say to them. An example of the hundreds of "Say" signs: *Say: I admonish you in but one thing: That you stand up for God by twos and one by one. Again, reflect. There is not in your companion any madness. He is only a warner to you of a severe punishment in advance of you.* (34:46)

The Quran gives narratives of the past so that the people may think and reflect over them.

God tells us that the objective of so many stories which have been mentioned in various sections is to motivate humanity to think and reflect in order to get lessons and to seek wisdom. *If We willed, We would have exalted him with them, but he inclined towards the earth, and followed his own desires. And his parable is like the parable of a dog. If you will attack it, it pants. Or if you will leave it, it pants. That is the parable of the folk, those who denied Our signs. Then, relate these narratives so that perhaps they will reflect.* (7:176)

In the field of *tawhid* and to direct human being's attention to the creator: *Truly, in the creation of the heavens and of the earth and the alteration of nighttime and daytime there are signs for those imbued with intuition, those who remember God while upright and sitting and on their sides and they reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: Our Lord! You had not created this in vain. Glory be to You! Then, protect us from the punishment of the fire.* (3:191-3:192)

To reflect upon the signs in the Quran: It is a blessed Book that *We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* (38:29)

WHAT ARE THE OBSTACLES TO QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING?

Arrogance (*takabbur*): *The Messiah will never disdain that he be a servant of God nor the angels, the ones who are brought near to Him. Whoever disdains His worship and grows arrogant, He will assemble them altogether to Himself.* (2:34)

Traditionalism and Blind Following (*taashub* and *taqlid*): *When it was said to them: Follow what God caused to descend. They said: Nay! We will follow whatever we discovered our fathers were following on it—even though their fathers had been not at all reasonable—nor are they truly guided.* (2:170)

Giving the Lie to the Messages (*takzib*): *Devised he a lie against God or is there a madness in him? Nay! Those who believe not in the world to come there is a punishment and a going far astray.* (34:8)

Hypocrisy (*nifaq*): *They, those who say: Spend not on such ones who are with the Messenger of God until they break away. To God belongs the treasures of the heavens and the earth but the ones who are hypocrites understand not.* (63:7)

Ignorance and Not Being Aware of the Truth (*jahlu*): *Even if We sent down the angels to them and the dead spoke to them and we assembled everything against them, face to face, yet they would not believe unless God wills, except many of them are ignorant.* (6:111)

Lust and Desires (*hawa*): *Surely, He explained distinctly to you what He forbade to you unless you were driven by necessity to it. Truly, many cause others to go astray by their desires without knowledge. Truly, your Lord, He is greater in knowledge of the ones who exceed the limits.* (6:119)

Reliance on Conjecture, Opinion: *If you have obeyed most of who are on the earth, they will cause you to go astray from the way of God. They follow nothing but opinion and they only guess.* (6:116)

Turning Away from the Truth (*fasiqun*, ones who disobey): *O Prophet! Struggle with the ones who are ungrateful and the ones who are hypocrites and be you harsh against them. Their place of shelter will be hell. Miserable will be the Homecoming! They swear by God that they said not against the Prophet but, certainly, they said the word of ingratitude and they were un-*

grateful after their submission to God. They were about to do something that they never attain. They sought revenge but that God would enrich them and His Messenger with His grace. If they repent, it would be better for them. If they turn away, God will punish them with a painful punishment in the present and in the world to come. There is not for them on earth either a protector or a helper. (9:73-9:74)[7]

What are the obstacles to being Quranic Critical Thinkers?

Since most language is acquired by hearing words used in context, try to make critical terms part of your working vocabulary.

When you are reasoning or discussing the reasoning of others, you can use critical vocabulary. New words are most easily learned and remembered when they are clearly useful.

When introducing a term, speak in pairs of sentences: first, using the critical vocabulary, then, rephrasing the sentence without the new term, e.g.:

What facts are relevant to this issue?
What facts must I consider in deciding this issue?
What information do I need?

You can also rephrase your statements to incorporate the vocabulary.

Do you mean that your classmate is assuming that ...?

When conducting discussions, explain the role of your remarks in the discussion: supporting a point, raising an objection, answering an objection, distinguishing concepts or issues, questioning relevance, etc.

Why were you raising that point here?
Are you supporting so-and-so's point or ?

Look up and discuss sets of related critical vocabulary words, and discuss relationships among them, when each can be used, and for what purposes.

Quranic Challenges

Quranic references to concentrated and goal-oriented thinking provoked by the challenge to find something new or to solve a difficult problem (tadabbur) and the exercise of intellect occur in conjunction with basically five major themes:

Belief in the Oneness of God (*tawhid*)
Reflection on the Quran
The Human Being and the Universe

Thinking Itself

As the revelations continue and new converts come,[8] it becomes necessary to find a place to meet. It is probably sometime between 612 and 613 CE that Arqam, ibn Abd Manaf ibn Asad, who had previously converted, offers his home to Muhammad. It is situated a short distance from his own dwelling upon the gentle rise of the Safa. Fronting the Kabah to the east, it is in a frequented position and pilgrims, in the prescribed course, must often pass by it. Anyone who showed a leaning towards the Quranic message was conducted to this home. There Muhammad would recite signs from the Quran to them and explain what the believe in the One God meant. Thus it has been recorded about many of the believers that they accepted the message in the house of Arqam. So famous is it as the birthplace of believers, that it was in after times styled the House of Islam.

Arqam later makes it into a trust: In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate: This is what Arqam has determined regarding the house that borders upon Safa, that it is devoted as a part of the sacred place. It shall not be sold neither shall it be inherited. Witnessed by Hisham ibn al-As and his freeman.[9]

QURANIC CHAPTER 7: THE ELEVATED PLACES (AL-ARAF)
SIGNS 7:59-7:64

Makkah: Book 25: Noah (7:59)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (7:60)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (7:61)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (7:62)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (7:63)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (7:64)

QURANIC CHAPTER 7: THE ELEVATED PLACES (AL-ARAF)
SIGNS 7:65-7:72

Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (7:65)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (7:66)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (7:67)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (7:68)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (7:69)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (7:70)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (7:71)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (7:72)

QURANIC CHAPTER 7: THE ELEVATED PLACES (AL-ARAF)
SIGNS 7:73-7:84

Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud and Lot (7:73)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud and Lot (7:74)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud and Lot (7:75)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud and Lot (7:76)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud and Lot (7:77)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud and Lot (7:78)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud and Lot (7:79)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud and Lot (7:80)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud and Lot (7:81)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud and Lot (7:82)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud and Lot (7:83)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud and Lot (7:84)

QURANIC CHAPTER 7: THE ELEVATED PLACES (AL-ARAF)
SIGNS 7:85-7:93

Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb) and the People of Midian (7:85)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb) and the People of Midian (7:86)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb) and the People of Midian (7:87)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb) and the People of Midian (7:88)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb) and the People of Midian (7:89)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb) and the People of Midian (7:90)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb) and the People of Midian (7:91)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb) and the People of Midian (7:92)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb) and the People of Midian (7:93)

QURANIC CHAPTER 7: THE ELEVATED PLACES (AL-ARAF)
SIGNS 7:94-7:99

Makkah: *And We sent not any Messenger to a town,*
but We took its people
with tribulation and desolation
so that perhaps they will lower themselves. (7:94)
Again, We substituted in place of evil deeds, benevolence,
until they exceeded in number and they said:
Surely, our fathers were touched
by tribulation and gladness.

Then, We took them suddenly
while they are not aware. (7:95)
And if the people of the towns believed
and were God-conscious,
We would have opened blessings for them
from the heaven and the earth,
except they denied.
So We took them for what they had been earning. (7:96)
Were, then, the people of the towns safe
when Our might
approaches them at night
while they are ones who sleep? (7:97)
Or were the people of the towns safe
when Our might approaches them
in the forenoon while they play?(7:98)
Were they safe from the planning of God?
No one deems himself safe from the planning of God
but the folk, the ones who are losers! (7:99)

COMMENTARY°

And We sent not any Messenger to a town, but We took its people with tribulation and desolation so that perhaps they will lower themselves. (7:94) Far be it from God to punish His servants physically or cause them to go through adversity that affects their persons or their property for idle play. Such trials could never be motivated by hatred or the desire for revenge, as pagan legends make out. God tries with tribulations and adversity those who deny His message.

But then God may decide to change the type of trial: *Again, We substituted in place of evil deeds, benevolence, until they exceeded in number and they said: Surely, our fathers were touched by tribulation and gladness. Then, We took them suddenly while they are not aware.* (7:95) Thus, every aspect of difficulty is replaced by an aspect of comfort and happiness. People begin to enjoy affluence, ease, blessings, good health, fertility, numerical strength and security after they had experienced poverty, hardship, depression, poor health, sterility, numerical weakness and fear. But the change of fortunes is no more than a new trial.

This statement, (7:95), indicates that they had increased in numbers and enjoyed an easy life, tasting every pleasure, to the extent that they no longer hesitated to do anything they desired, nor did they feel embarrassed by any action.

This: *And if the people of the towns believed and were God-conscious, We would have opened blessings for them from the heaven*

and the earth, except they denied. So We took them for what they had been earning. (7:96) is the other part of the natural law God has set in operation. Had the people of those cities believed instead of denying God's messages, and had they been God-consciousness instead of being careless, God would have opened up for them blessings from heaven and earth.

This section has thus established the fact that God's law is set in operation and will never fail, as confirmed by the history of former communities. Now that feelings are high about the doom that befell those who rejected the faith and overlooked the purpose of their test, the section addresses those who have so far overlooked these facts of life: *Were, then, the people of the towns safe when Our might approaches them at night while they are ones who sleep? Or were the people of the towns safe when Our might approaches them in the forenoon while they play? Were they safe from the planning of God? No one deems himself safe from the planning of God but the folk, the ones who are losers!* (7:97-7:99)

It tries to awaken in them a sense of expectation, alerting them to the fact that God's might may strike them at any time of day or night, when they are asleep, at work or having fun: (7:97-7:99)

Were they safe from the planning of God? (7:99) Can they have any immunity against what God plans for human beings when He does not reveal those plans to them so that they can guard against them? If they feel so secure, then the fact is that: *No one deems himself safe from the planning of God but the folk, the ones who are losers!* (7:99)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 7:94-7:99

WHO IS GOD?

God sends Messengers.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

Messengers are sent to a town whom God takes with great suffering and misery because they would not lower themselves to God. If they had not denied, God would have opened blessing for them, but they denied. The Quranic message then asks: Were the people of the towns safe from Our might when it comes to them at night? Or when it comes to them in the forenoon while they play? It then asks a rhetorical question: Were they safe from the planning of God? And it answers: Only the losers think that they will be safe from the might of God.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message describe what happened to the people in towns in the past who denied.What happened to people in towns in the past who denied? God took them with great suffering and misery because of their arrogance in denying God's signs. What one's relationship to God should be. God will send blessings to those who are not arrogant and who do not deny His signs. There are consequences to being arrogant. There were towns in the past, the people of which were arrogant and denied God's signs.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to do the following:
Support a point
Raise an objection
Answer an objection
Distinguish concepts or issues
Question relevance, etc.

LESSON 39(8). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PREPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED

HOW IS AN ASSUMPTION DEFINED?

What is an assumption? An assumptions is a conjecture, a guess, an opinion, a premise, a hypothesis of a thing that is accepted as true or as certain to happen, without proof. All human thought and action or experiences are based on assumptions. The thought process needs them in order to be able to move forward. The key is for students to be aware of them.

In understanding your own assumptions as you try to exercise Quranic thinking, you begin to realize that you can't figure out everything simultaneously. You have to make assumptions to figure something out. It is not possible to have many unanswered questions at the same time. The mind must make assumptions as it works to problem solve. It must take something for granted. You know that you can always question assumptions as you move forward in your thought process. At the same time, you should think about the assumptions that you are making. You should try to make them with some awareness by asking yourself: Do they make sense? You are in a better position to evaluate any reasoning or behavior when all of the elements of that reasoning or behavior are made explicit. You base both your reasoning and your behavior on beliefs you take for granted. You are often unaware of these assumptions. It is only by recognizing them that you can evaluate them.

Quranic thinkers have a passion for truth and for accepting the strongest reasoning. Thus, they have the intellectual courage to seek out and reject false assumptions of others. They realize that everyone makes some questionable assumptions. They are willing to question, and have others question, even their own most cherished assumptions. They consider alternative assumptions. They base their acceptance or rejection of assumptions on their rational scrutiny of them. They hold questionable assumptions with an appropriate degree of tentativeness. Independent thinkers evaluate assumptions for themselves, and do not simply accept the assumptions of others, even those assumptions made by everyone they know.

HOW ARE ASSUMPTIONS USED IN THE QURAN?

When students study Quranic concepts, there is something that they find in the signs that refer to assumptions people make. For example: *Assumes he that none has power over him? He says: I have caused abundant wealth to perish. Assumes he that none sees him? Make we not two eyes for him and a tongue and two lips and guided him to the two open highways? Yet he rushed not onto the steep ascent. What will cause you to recognize what the steep ascent is? It is the liberating of a bondsperson or feeding on a day possessing famine an orphan, possessor of kinship, or a needy, possessor of misery.*

Again, it had been among those who believed and counseled one another to having patience and counseled one another to clemency. (90:5-90:17)

Much of what is wrong with human thought can be found in the uncritical or unexamined assumptions that underlie it. For example, students often experience the world in such a way as to assume that they are observing things just as they are, as though they were seeing the world without the filter of a point of view. People they disagree with, of course, they recognize as having a point of view. *Say: Shall We tell you who will be ones who are losers by their actions? It is those whose endeavoring went astray in this present life while they assume that they are doing good by their handiwork.* (18:103-18:104)

One of the key dispositions of critical thinking is the on-going sense that as humans students always think within a perspective, that they virtually never experience things totally and absolutely. There is a connection therefore between thinking so as to be aware of their assumptions and being intellectually humble. *Assumed humanity that they will be left because they say: We believed and they will not be tried?* (29:2)

All reasoning must begin somewhere, must take some things for granted. Any 'defect' in the assumptions or presuppositions with which the reasoning begins is a possible source of problems. Assessing skills of reasoning involves assessing the ability to recognize and articulate their assumptions, again according to the relevant standards. *Assumed those who sought to do evil deeds that We will make them equal with those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality? Are their living and dying equal? How evil is the judgment they give!* (45:21)

A Quranic thinker's assumptions may be stated clearly or unclearly; the assumptions may be justifiable or unjustifiable, crucial or extraneous, consistent or contradictory. The feedback students receive from teachers on their ability to meet the relevant standards will be a large factor in the improvement of the Quranic student reasoning. *Or assumed you that you would enter the Garden while God knows not those who struggled among you and knows the ones who remain steadfast?* (3:142)

Assumptions usually operate at the subconscious or unconscious level of thought. Assumptions should be justified by sound evidence. *Assumes the human being that We will never gather his bones? Yea! We are ones who have power to shape his fingers again. Nay! The human being wants to act immorally in front of him. He asks: When is this Day of Resurrection? But when their sight will be astonished and the moon will cause the earth to be swallowed and the sun and the moon will be gathered, the human being will say on that Day: Where is a place to run away to?* (75:3-75:10)]

Assume they that We hear not their secret thoughts and their conspiring secretly? Yea! Our messengers are near them writing down. (43:80)

How do I learn to make assumptions?

Make assumptions explicit as often as possible—assumptions made from what you read or hear and assumptions you make. Ask questions that elicit the implicit elements of your claims. Although it is valuable practice to make good assumptions explicit, it is especially important when assumptions are questionable.

Those who refuse God's message are ones who follow assumptions, conjecture and opinion without examining or evaluating them. The assumption that is questioned here is the accusation made by those ungrateful for God's blessings, the same accusation made by Satan when he refused to bow down to Adam, namely, that it is the fault of God's Will that they ascribed partners with God (or, as in the case of Satan, it was God Who willed that Satan not bow down to Adam). The Quran asks the ungrateful: *Is there any knowledge with you that you bring out to Us?* (6:148)

God's revelation clearly states not to associate partners with God, but the ungrateful refuse to believe and prefer, instead to make excuses for their behavior rather than admit to their error. This sign teaches critical thinkers to question and distinguish between that which is conjecture and opinion and that which is the truth.

Analyze group influences on your life: Closely analyze the behavior that is encouraged, and discouraged, in the groups to which you belong. For any given group, what are you 'required' to believe? What are you 'forbidden' to do? Every group enforces some level of conformity. Most people live much too much within the view of themselves projected by others. Discover what pressure they are bowing to and think explicitly about whether or not to reject that pressure.

Next consider how you could integrate analyzing group influences on your life into your actions. One of the main things that groups do is control us by controlling the definitions you are allowed to operate with. When a group defines some things as 'cool' and some as 'dumb', the members of the group try to appear 'cool' and not appear 'dumb'. When the boss of a business says: 'That makes a lot of sense,' his subordinates know t5ey are not to say: 'No, it is ridiculous.' They know this because defining someone as the 'boss' gives him/her special privileges to define situations and relationships.

Quranic Chapter 7: The Elevated Places (al-Araf)
Signs 7:100-7:108

Makkah: *Guides not those who inherit the earth*
after its previous people that if We will,
We would light on them for their impieties,

and We set a seal on their hearts so they hear not? (7:100)
These are the towns.
Their tidings We relate to you.
And, certainly, their Messengers drew near them
with the clear portents.
But they had not been believing
in what they denied before.
Thus, God set a seal on the hearts
of the ones who are ungrateful. (7:101)
And We found not in many of them any compact.
And, truly, We found many of them
are ones who disobey. (7:102)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (7:103)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (7:104)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (7:105)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (7:106)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (7:107)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (7:108)

COMMENTARY°

This short commentary concludes with an address to the Prophet Muhammad, telling him that these histories are being related so that he knows the true position of those communities. He is the last Messenger and his followers are the nation which inherits the divine message in its totality.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 7:100-7:108

WHO IS GOD?

God seals the hearts of those who sin and transgress so they do not hear.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

Prophet Muhammad is told of peoples and towns of the past whose Messengers suffered the same way that he is by the ungrateful continuing to deny God's signs.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message tells the Prophet Muhammad about people of the past who denied the Messengers that God sent in the same way that the ungrateful Quraysh are denying the Quranic message. Do the ungrateful not know that God set a seal on the hearts of the ungrateful in the past who denied His signs. Those in the past who denied God's signs and the Messengers that He sent to the people had seals placed on their hearts so they could no longer hear the message. Many of them were ones who disobey. Prophet Muhammad should not lose heart, as what is happening to him by the ungrateful Quraysh, happened to Messengers in the past, as well. The ungrateful in the past were no different than they were at the time of Prophet Muhammad. Prophet Muhammad should not lose heart as what he is experiencing is what Messengers in the past also experienced. The ungrateful, past and present, deny God's signs.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I frequently evaluated my listening.
I actively listening for main points.
I was able to summarize what my instructor said in my own words.
I was able to elaborate what is meant by key terms.
I learned to frequently evaluate my reading.
I am trying to read the Quranic text actively.
I am asking questions as I read.
I am learning to distinguish what I understand from what I don't.

LESSON 39(9). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY GENERATING IMPLICATIONS, CONSEQUENCES

WHAT ARE IMPLICATIONS?

Implications follow from our thoughts.

WHAT ARE CONSEQUENCES?

Consequences follow from our actions.

REASONING WELL

The ability to reason well is measured in part by an ability to understand and enunciate the implications and, then, the consequences of the reasoning. For example: I think this or that. What does this thought imply? What would be the consequences if I were to act upon that thought?

IMPLICATIONS IN REASONING

WHEN YOU SPELL OUT THE IMPLICATIONS OF YOUR REASONING:

Have you succeeded in identifying significant and realistic implications?
Have you confined yourselves to unimportant and unrealistic ones?
Have you enunciated the implications of your views clearly and precisely enough to permit your thinking to be evaluated by the validity of those implications?
Can you trace the implications and consequences that come from your reasoning?

As the revelation speaks of those in past generations who denied their Messengers, the ungrateful among the Quraysh decide that they should speak to Muhammad himself and try to bribe him to give up his mission with money and fame.

One evening at sunset, they gather around the Kabah. They send someone to bring Muhammad to meet with them. Muhammad sits down beside them. The leader of the Quraysh group says to him: No one has done to us what you have done. You have spoken out against our fathers and forefathers. You have reproached our beliefs. You have rebuked our gods. You have made light of our thoughts. You have destroyed our unity. What is your purpose in all of this? If it is to gather money and wealth, we will give it to you. If it is because of ambition, we will give you position. If you want leadership, we will follow you. If you suffer from a mental illness, we will send the best doctors to you. We have come to negotiate with you.

The Messenger responds with the moral reasonableness of a religiously cultured monotheist, saying: I do what I do neither to gather wealth nor to seek superiority nor have I been chosen for leadership.

God has sent me as a warner to you. He has revealed the Quran to me. I bring glad tidings and fear of the chastisement. I have expressed my mission to you. Whenever you accept you will find well-being in both this world and the next. If you reject it, I will persevere until God judges between you and me.

QURANIC CHAPTER 7: THE ELEVATED PLACES (AL-ARAF)
SIGNS 7:109-7:126

Makkah: Book 27 Moses and Pharaoh (7:109)
Makkah: Book 27 Moses and Pharaoh (7:110)
Makkah: Book 27 Moses and Pharaoh (7:111)
Makkah: Book 27 Moses and Pharaoh (7:112)
Makkah: Book 27 Moses and Pharaoh (7:113)
Makkah: Book 27 Moses and Pharaoh (7:114)
Makkah: Book 27 Moses and Pharaoh (7:115)
Makkah: Book 27 Moses and Pharaoh (7:116)
Makkah: Book 27 Moses and Pharaoh (7:117)
Makkah: Book 27 Moses and Pharaoh (7:118)
Makkah: Book 27 Moses and Pharaoh (7:119)
Makkah: Book 27 Moses and Pharaoh (7:120)
Makkah: Book 27 Moses and Pharaoh (7:121)
Makkah: Book 27 Moses and Pharaoh (7:122)
Makkah: Book 27 Moses and Pharaoh (7:123)
Makkah: Book 27 Moses and Pharaoh (7:124)
Makkah: Book 27 Moses and Pharaoh (7:125)
Makkah: Book 27 Moses and Pharaoh (7:126)

QURANIC CHAPTER 7: THE ELEVATED PLACES (AL-ARAF)
SIGNS 7:127-7:129

MAKKAH: BOOK 27: PERSECUTION OF THE CHILDREN OF JACOB (7:127)
MAKKAH: BOOK 27: PERSECUTION OF THE CHILDREN OF JACOB (7:128)
MAKKAH: BOOK 27: PERSECUTION OF THE CHILDREN OF JACOB (7:129)

QURANIC CHAPTER 7: THE ELEVATED PLACES (AL-ARAF)
SIGNS 7:130-7:141

MAKKAH: BOOK 27: MOSES AND THE CHILDREN OF JACOB (7:130)
MAKKAH: BOOK 27: MOSES AND THE CHILDREN OF JACOB (7:131)
MAKKAH: BOOK 27: MOSES AND THE CHILDREN OF JACOB (7:132)

Makkah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (7:133)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (7:134)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (7:135)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (7:136)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (7:137)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (7:138)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (7:139)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (7:140)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (7:141)

Quranic Chapter 7: The Elevated Places (al-Araf)
Signs 7:142-7:147

Makkah: Book 27: Moses (7:142)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (7:143)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (7:144)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (7:145)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (7:146)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (7:147)

Quranic Chapter 7: The Elevated Places (al-Araf)
Signs 7:148-7:151

Makkah: Book 27: Worshipping the Calf (7:148)
Makkah: Book 27: Worshipping the Calf (7:149)
Makkah: Book 27: Worshipping the Calf (7:150)
Makkah: Book 27: Worshipping the Calf (7:151)

Quranic Chapter 7: The Elevated Places (al-Araf)
Signs 7:152-7:157

Makkah: Book 27 Moses (7:152)
Makkah: Book 27 Moses (7:153)
Makkah: Book 27 Moses (7:154)
Makkah: Book 27 Moses (7:155)

Makkah: *And prescribe for us in the present benevolence*
and in the world to come.
Truly we turned back to You.
He said: I light My punishment on whom I will
and My mercy encompassed everything.

Then, I will prescribe it for those who are God-conscious
and give the purifying alms
and those, they who believe in Our signs, (7:156)
those who follow the Messenger—the unlettered Prophet—whom they
will find with them
that which is a writing in the Torah and the Gospel.
He commands them to that which is honorable
and prohibits them from that which is unlawful.
And he permits to them what is good
and forbids them from deeds of corruption.
And he lays down for them severe tests,
and the yokes that had been on them.
So those who believed in him and supported him
and helped him and followed the light
that was caused to descend to him,
those, they are the ones who prosper. (7:157)

COMMENTARY°

The expression here shows that God's grace and mercy is far greater than the whole universe whose dimensions are impossible for human beings to visualize. Great indeed is the mercy whose measure is only known to God Himself.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 7:156-7:157

WHO IS GOD?

God lights His punishment on whom He wills, but His mercy encompasses everything. He prescribes His mercy for those who follow His signs.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

In sign 7:157 the Quranic message states what had been told to Moses about Prophet Muhammad. It says that God's mercy will be prescribed for those who are God-conscious, who give the purifying alms and those who believe in God's signs, those who follow the unlettered Prophet who has been mentioned in the Torah and the Gospel. He commands the people to that which is honorable and prohibits them from that which is unlawful. He permits to them what is good and forbids them from deeds of corruption. He lays severe tests on them.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The Quranic messages tells the community that the name of Prophet Muhammad is mentioned in the Torah and the Gospel that came before. Those who follow what he tells them will attain a state of happiness.

Student Assessment

Example of How Critical Thinking Works

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

Example of How Quranic Critical Thinking Works

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message tells Prophet Muhammad what had been revealed about him in the Torah and the Gospel thereby insuring the community in Makkah that Prophet Muhammad was a Messenger sent by God. How is Prophet Muhammad mentioned in the Torah and the Gospel? In Deut. 18.15 Moses says: The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me. The only other Prophet who brought a divine law like that of Moses was Prophet Muhammad and he was of the house of Ishmael. And then, in the Gospel, Jesus promised another comforter (John 14.16). The Greek word, Periclyte, is the Greek form of Ahmad, an Arabic derivative of Muhammad. The coming of Prophet Muhammad had been mentioned in the Torah and the Gospel. The coming of Prophet Muhammad had been foreseen in previous sacred texts. This is further proof that Prophet Muhammad was chosen by God as His Messenger, and that Prophet Muhammad did not know before the revelation of these signs that he had been foreseen in the Torah and the Gospel.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned or answer the questions. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

Ask yourself:

Do I talk about what I have not yet done?
Why do I do so?
What evidence do I have?

LESSON 39(10). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT

WHAT ARE QURANIC MORAL TRAITS?

Moral traits are interdependent affective strategies. They are described as having:

The traits of mind and character necessary for right action and thinking;
The traits of mind and character essential for fair-minded rationality;
The traits that distinguish the narrow-minded, self-serving critical thinker from the open-minded, truth-seeking critical thinker.

Each moral trait is best developed while developing the others as well. They cannot be imposed from without; they must be cultivated by encouragement and example. People can come to deeply understand and accept these principles by analyzing their experiences of them: learning from an unfamiliar perspective, discovering they don't know as much as you thought, and so on.

To teach for the moral traits, one must recognize the significant differences between the higher order critical thinking of a fair-minded critical thinker (believer) and that of a self-serving critical thinker (ungrateful, hypocrite and so forth). Though both share a certain command of the skills of critical thinking, they are not equally good at tasks, which presuppose the moral traits. The self-serving (weak sense) critical thinker would lack the insights that underlie and support these traits.

Insight refers to the ability to see and clearly and deeply understand the inner nature of things. In the Islamic perspective, this is something that extremists would disagree with whereas instruction for Quranic critical thinking fosters insight rather than mere performance; it cultivates the achievement of deeper knowledge and understanding through insight. Thinking one's way into and through a sign (*ayah*) leads to insights as one synthesizes what one is learning, relating one sign to other signs and all signs to personal experience.

HOW DO I EXPERIENCE THE SEVEN QURANIC MORAL TRAITS?

Only when one gains analyzed experiences of working and reasoning one's way out of prejudice can one gain the higher order abilities of a fair-minded Quranic critical thinker. What one gains is somewhat 'procedural' or sequential in that there is a process one must go through; but one also sees that the process cannot be followed out based on a formula or an algorithm, it depends on principles. The somewhat abstract articulation of the moral traits will take on concrete meaning in the light of analyzed experiences. Their true meaning to us will be given in and by these experiences. We will often return to them to recapture and rekindle the insights upon which the moral traits depend.

Generally, to develop moral traits, you must create a collection of analyzed experiences that represent to you intuitive models, not only of the pitfalls of their own previous thinking and experiencing but also processes for rea-

soning their way out of or around them. These model experiences must be charged with meaning for you. You cannot be indifferent to them. You must sustain them in your mind by their sense of their importance as they sustain and guide them in their thinking.

Intuition can be defined as the direct knowing or learning of something without the conscious use of reasoning. You sometimes seem to know or learn things without recognizing how you came to that knowledge. When this occurs, you experience an inner sense that what you believe is true. The problem is that sometimes you are correct (and have genuinely experienced an intuition) and sometimes you are incorrect (having fallen victim to one of your prejudices or your imagination). A critical thinker does not blindly accept that what one thinks or believes but cannot account for is necessarily true. Critical thinkers realizes how easily they confuse intuitions and prejudices. Critical thinkers may follow their inner sense that something is so, but only with a healthy sense of humility.

What does this imply? It implies a somewhat different content or material focus. Our own minds and experiences must become the subject of our study and learning. Indeed, only to the extent that the content of our own experiences becomes an essential part of study will the usual subject matter truly be learned. By the same token, the experiences of others must become part of what you study. But experiences of any kind should always be critically analyzed, and you must do your own analyses and clearly recognize what you are doing.

WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS TO ATTAINING QURANIC MORAL TRAITS?

(1) Pursuit of Caprice (*hawa*) which may consist of love, hatred, pomposity and prejudice that confound impartiality and sound judgment: *Had you considered he who took to himself his own desire as his god and whom God caused to go astray out of a knowledge, sealed over his having the ability to hear and his heart and laid a blindfold on his sight?* (45:23) *And if you had followed their desires after what drew near you of the knowledge, there is not for you from God either a protector or a helper.* (2:120) *And who is one who goes astray than whoever followed his own desires without guidance from God? ...* (28:50) *And obey not him whose heart We made neglectful of Our Remembrance and who followed his own desires and whose affair had been excess.* (18:28) The choice is between two alternatives: caprice (*hawa*) and guidance (*huda*); the former evidently renders unclear one's attempt to attain the latter.

(2) Pursuit of Conjecture in the face of certitude: *And most of them follow nothing but opinion* (zann). *Truly, opinion avails them not against The Truth at all. Truly, God is Knowing of what they accomplish.* (10:36) Knowledge and truth stand in contradistinction with the pursuit of conjecture. *And follow up not of what there is not for you knowledge* (ilm) *of it. Truly, having the*

ability to hear and sight and mind, each of those will have been that which is asked. (17:36) Note that the text says one should not follow conjecture until it is established and elevated to the rank of knowledge. It does not say that one should avoid conjecture altogether. In another place, conjecture occurs side by side with desires or that which they themselves de- sires. *They follow nothing but opinion* (zann) *and that for which their souls yearn* (hawa). (53:23) This is the kind of conjecture that is meant. Knowledge is established by sense-perception that often begins with a measure of speculation and doubt but which is affirmed by the light of reason and conviction. Some commentators maintain that the main context for this guideline is religion: thus it is said that one should not take speculative positions in matters of belief. As for scientific enquiry and pursuit of knowledge, conjecture is neither discouraged nor avoidable.

The ultimate purpose of this engagement is to attain the truth. Once the truth is attained, one should then commit oneself to it and observe it: *And what else is there after The Truth but wandering astray. Where, then, turn you away?* (10:32) *There is no one who changes His Words.* (6:115)

(3) Blind Imitation of Others: The correct exercise of reason in Islam is tied to personal conviction as opposed to indiscriminate following of others, hallowed custom, and precedent. These must be judged in the light of reason and abandoned if found deviant and misleading: The misguided will say, as the Quran provides: *We will follow whatever we discovered our fathers were following on it —even though their fathers had been not at all reasonable—nor are they truly guided.* (2:170) This was the response that Prophet Abraham and other great prophets received from their detractors, but the text address them again and again that both you and your ancestors were clearly misguided. Certainly, We gave Abraham his right judgment before. *And We had been ones who know of him when he said to his father and his folk: What are these images to which you be ones who give your- selves up to? They said: We found our fathers as ones who are worshippers of them. He said: Certainly, you and your fathers had been in a clear wandering astray.* (21:51-54) *They said: Have you brought about to us that we should worship God alone and forsake what our fathers had been worshipping?* (7:70) As we shall presently elaborate, indiscriminate imitation of others is widely held to be the single most damaging cause of the decline of creative thinking among Muslims.

(4) Oppressive Dictatorship: The Quran takes to task arrogant dictators and those who support them and follow them. Hence the plea of those who say: *And they will say: Our Lord! Truly, we obeyed our chiefs and our great ones. They caused us to go astray from the way* (33:67) should be of no merit. In a number of other places the text denounces the Pharaoh and Karun for their oppressive ways who misled their people in rejecting the guidance that was conveyed to them.[10]

As the ungrateful Quraysh continue to follow the barriers to the traits that the Prophet was trying to teach them, they went to his family, sad and grieving, because his hope that the ungrateful would accept his preaching was in vain and because of their estrangement from him. When the Messenger had gone, Abu Jahl spoke, making the usual charges against him, and saying: I call God to witness that I will wait for him tomorrow with a stone which I can hardly lift, or words to that effect. When he prostrates himself in prayer I will split his skull with it. Betray me or defend me, let the Ibn Abd al-Manaf do what they like after that.

They said that they would never betray him on any account, and he could carry on with his project. When morning came Abu Jahl took a stone and sat in wait for the Messenger, who behaved as usual that morning. While he was in Makkah he faced Syria in formal prayer, and when he prayed, he prayed between the southern corner and the Black Stone, putting the Kabah between himself and Syria. Muhammad rose to pray while the Quraysh sat in their meeting, waiting for what Abu Jahl was to do. When the Messenger prostrated himself, Abu Jahl took up the stone and went towards him, until when he got near him, he turned back in flight, pale with terror, and his hand had withered upon the stone, so that he cast the stone from his hand. The Quraysh asked him what had happened. He replied that when he got near him a camel's stallion got in his way. He said: By God I have never seen anything like his head, shoulders, and teeth on any stallion before, and he made as though he would eat me.

I was told that the Messenger said: That was Gabriel. If he had come near, he would have seized him.

Quranic Chapter 7: The Elevated Places (al-Araf)

Signs 7:158-7:162

Makkah: *Say: O humanity! Truly I am the Messenger of God to you all from Him to Whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. There is no god but He. He gives life and He causes to die. So believe in God and His Messenger, the unlettered Prophet, whoever believes in God and His words and follow him so that perhaps you would be truly guided.* (7:158)

Makkah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (7:159)

Makkah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (7:160)

Makkah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (7:161)

Makkah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (7:162)

COMMENTARY°

The section pauses at this point to address the unlettered Prophet himself, giving him God's order to declare that his message applies to all humanity, in fulfilment of God's promise: (7:158)

Therefore, it was conveyed by the unlettered Prophet whose nature remained pure, refined only by the care he received from God. The Prophet's pure nature conveyed the naturally pure message, addressing the very nature that is common to all humanity: (7:158) This Quranic sign which commands God's Messenger to address his message to all humanity was revealed in Makkah.

Having commanded the Prophet to declare that his message applies to all humanity, the Quranic sign continues to make it clear that the Prophet's role is to make people fully aware of who is their true Lord: *to Whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. There is no god but He. He gives life and He causes to die.* (7:158)

The Prophet, then, is a Messenger to all humanity from their Lord who is the Sovereign of the whole universe to which they themselves belong. He is the only God to whom everything in the universe submits. The clearest manifestation of God and His power is seen in the fact that He alone grants life and causes death. (7:158)

SUMMARY OF SIGN 7:158

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

Prophet Muhammad is told to say: I am the Messenger of God to all of humanity. There is no god, but He. It is God who gives live and causes death so believe in God and His Messenger, the unlettered Prophet who himself believes in God and His words. Follow him so that you will perhaps be truly guided.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The Quranic message is for Prophet Muhammad to say that he is the Messenger for all of humanity. Those who follow him will perhaps be truly guided.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message tells the Prophet Muhammad that he is a Messenger for all of humanity. What does the Quranic message say that Prophet Muhammad should tell all of humanity? He should tell all of humanity that there is no god but He, that it is He who gives life and causes death and that humanity should believe in the unlettered Prophet who himself believes in God and His Words. Prophet Muhammad is a Messenger for all of humanity. Prophet Muhammad has been given a message for all of humanity. The Quranic message that is revealed to Prophet Muhammad is not just for the Makkan community of that time, but for all of humanity. That the Makkan community does not know that Prophet Muhammad has been sent for all of humanity.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I WAS ABLE TO EXPLORE THE INTERRELATIONSHIPS OF THESE PARTS:

How did my point of view, values, desires, etc., affect what I noticed about the sign?

How did they prevent me from noticing other things?

How would I have interpreted the sign had I noticed those other things?

How did my point of view, desires, etc., affect my interpretation?

How should I interpret the situation?

LESSON 39(11). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT BELIEF IN ONE GOD (*TAWHID*)

The greatest emphasis in the Quran is on the Oneness or Unity of God (*tawhid*, monotheism) which implies belief that God is One. He created the universe and all that is in it and that at every moment there is a new creation. *Were We wearied by the first creation? No! They are perplexed about a new creation.* (50:15) He created moral order among us where we are judged according to the merit of our deeds: *Whoever does the weight of an atom of good will see it. Whoever does the weight of an atom of the worst will see it.* (99:7-99:8)

We are not judged arbitrarily: *Know that God will never be One Who Causes to Change a divine blessing when He was gracious to a folk unless they first change what is within themselves. And, truly, God is Hearing, Knowing.* (8:53)

This moral order works without any favor, not only in the case of individuals, but also in the case of societies and peoples: *Mention when Moses said to his folk: O my folk! Remember the divine blessing of God on you when He assigned Prophets among you and assigned kings and gives you what He gave not to anyone of the worlds.* (5:20)

God has entered into covenant with human beings within the limits of this moral order with people as such and not with particular nations or races: *O those who believed! Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God and let not that you hate a folk drive you into not dealing justly. Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness* (taqwa). *Be God-conscious of God. Truly, God is Aware of what you do.* (5:8)

WHAT IS PROOF THAT I BELIEVE IN ONE GOD?

Reason: First of all, our proof of our belief ultimately depends upon our ability to reason. Without reason, we would not be able to understand the Quranic signs nor respond to their message. The connection between faith and reason is the key to our Quranic critical thinking. It is through this connection that our thoughts and emotions grow into a harmony with each other. The Quran repeatedly asks us to think about the signs of God in the universe and within ourselves, to understand God's presence within us and in the universe, and ultimately to find the truth. The concept of the Quranic signs seeks creates a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those who have intuition recollect.* (38:29)

Good deeds: *Proof that we believe in the One God (unity) is through competing with one another in good deeds,* (3:114; 23:61) *Do good. Truly God loves the ones who are doers of good.* (2:195) *And among the good deeds is to obey God and to obey the Messenger.* (5:92) Note that 5:92 commands us to obey God and to obey the Messenger. It does not say: obey God and

obey Muhammad. The Prophet was sent as a Messenger to all of humanity to whom previous Messengers had been sent to tell the people to obey God and to obey the message that their Messenger is delivering.

WHAT ARE THE OBSTACLES TO BELIEF?

Irrationality: Irrationality is defined as:

1. Lacking the power to reason.
2. Contrary to reason or logic.
3. Senselessness, absurdity.

Irrational, uncritical thinkers have failed to develop the ability or power to reason well. Their beliefs and practices, then, are often contrary to reason and logic, and are sometimes senseless or absurd. If you find that you continually conclude that a rational person would behave just as you behaved you are probably engaging in self-deception.

WHAT IS A SENSE OF SELF-UNITY?

Self-unity, as one of the our ideals, implies unity within ourselves. That is, a coordination of our reason, will, and actions. To do this, we have to control our desires and "what we want". Belief in God is a necessary step for having a moral life, but it should not be that we accept with our words only. Our inner sense of unity must be accompanied by good deeds: *But for those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality, We place no burden on any soul beyond its capacity.* (7:42) Performing good deeds implies an attitude which is motivated by a complete submission to God's will: *When his Lord said to him: Submit! He said: I submitted to the Lord of the worlds.* (2:131)

WHAT IS FAMILY UNITY?

This ideal of unity also implies peace and harmony among members of a family. A husband and wife are mates for each other so that both may dwell in tranquillity with an attitude of mutual love and kindness; each is like a garment for the other for mutual support, mutual comfort, and mutual protection. It is the duty of a man and woman to live with each other on a footing of kindness and equity.

WHAT IS UNITY OF OUR SOCIETY?

The ideal of unity in our society demands that people should develop a healthy social organization which takes the middle path of moderation, integrity, goodness and morality, avoiding all forms of extreme: *Thus, We made you a middle community that you be witnesses to humanity, and that the Messenger be a witness to you.* (2:143) Unity in our society means to oppose oppression and corruption, otherwise: there will be persecution on the earth and the hateful sin of corruption. (8:73) The Quran says that all Muslims are brothers/sisters: *Only the ones who believe are brothers/sisters, so make things right*

between your two brothers/sisters. Be God-conscious of God so that perhaps you will find mercy. (49:10) Muslims should have great love and affection among themselves: *Muhammad is the Messenger of God. Those who are with him are severe against the one who is ungrateful, but compassionate among themselves.* (48:29) No excuse should be allowed to stand in the way of doing good or making peace between different persons: *Make God not an obstacle with your sworn oaths to your being good, and being God-conscious, and making things right among humanity.* (2:224) Every effort should be made to bring about peace between people. *Good is when we makes things right between humanity. And whoever accomplishes that—looking for the goodwill of God—then, We will give him a sublime compensation.* (4:114) We should be kind to those in need, to neighbors, and to the travelers as well.

WHAT IS THE UNITY OF HUMANITY?

Above all, this ideal of unity leads to the conception of unity of the whole of humanity. Humanity was created from a single pair of a male and a female and from a single breath of life. All people are equal members of the human community. The only distinction recognized by the Quran is based on the degree of God-consciousness possessed by people: *O humanity! Truly, We created you from a male and a female and made you into peoples and types that you recognize one another. Truly, the most generous of you with God is the most devout. Truly, God is Knowing, Aware.* (49:13)

WHAT DOES UNITY WITH PEOPLE OF OTHER FAITHS MEAN?

This attitude of toleration is to be cultivated in our relation to people of other faiths. The Quran aims at establishing a peaceful social atmosphere where people belonging to other faiths can enjoy freedom of conscience and worship: *There is no compulsion in the way of life* (religion). *Surely, right judgment became clear from error. So whoever disbelieves in false deities and believes in God, then, surely, he held fast to the most firm handhold. It is not breakable..* (2:256)

The believers are urged to purposefully rise and fight against the oppressors so that monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques in which the name of God is commemorated may not be destroyed. Permission was given to those who are fought against because they, they were wronged. Truly, Powerful is God to help them, those who were driven out from their homes without right because they say: *Our Lord is God! If not for God driving back humanity, some by some other, cloisters would be demolished and churches and synagogues and mosques in which is remembered in it the Name of God frequently. Truly, God will help whoever helps Him.* (22:39-22:40)

The Quran praises some of the people of the Book for their faith: *You had been the best community that was brought out for humanity. You command to that which is honorable and prohibit that which is unlawful and believe in God.* (3:110)

It is because of this attitude of tolerance that according to the Quran all those who believe in God and the Last Day and practice God-consciousness, whether they are Muslims, Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians or Sabeans, shall receive their reward from their Lord: *Truly those who have believed and those who have become Jews and the Christians and the Sabeans, whoever has believed in God and the Last Day and is one who acted in accord with morality, then for them, their compensation is with their Lord. And there will be neither fear in them nor will they feel remorse.* (2:62) *And: Truly, those who believed and those who became Jews and the Sabeans and the Christians and the Zoroastrians and those who ascribed partners—truly, God will distinguish between them on the Day of Resurrection.* (22:17)

The Quran gives an open invitation to the People of the Book to come together and work conjointly for the establishment of peace and social harmony based on the idea of the unity of God. *Say: O People of the Book! Approach now to a word common between us and between you that we worship none but God and ascribe nothing as partners with Him, that none of us take others to ourselves as lords besides God.* (3:64)

QURANIC CHAPTER 7: THE ELEVATED PLACES (AL-ARAF) SIGNS 7:163-7:171

Madinah (7:163)
Madinah (7:164)
Madinah (7:165)
Madinah (7:166)
Madinah (7:167)
Madinah (7:168)
Madinah (7:169)
Madinah (7:170)
Madinah (7:171)

QURANIC CHAPTER 7: THE ELEVATED PLACES (AL-ARAF) SIGNS 7:172-7:181

Makkah: *And mention when your Lord*
took from the Children of Adam
—from their generative organs—
their offspring and called to them
to witness of themselves:
Am I not your Lord?

They said: Yea! We bore witness
so that you say not on the Day of Resurrection:
Truly We had been
ones who were heedless of this. (7:172)[12]
Or you not say:
Our fathers before us ascribed partners with God.
We had been offspring after them.
Shall You cause us to perish
for what the ones who dealt in falsehood
accomplished? (7:173)
And, thus, We explain Our signs distinctly
so that perhaps they will return. (7:174)
And recount to them the tiding of him
to whom We gave Our signs,
but he cast himself off from them.
So Satan pursued him then, he had been among
the ones who are in error. (7:175)
And if We willed, We would have exalted him with them,
but he inclined towards the earth,
and followed his own desires.
And his parable is like the parable of a dog.
If you will attack it, it pants.
Or if you will leave it, it pants.
That is the parable of the folk, those who denied Our signs.
Then, relate these narratives
so that perhaps they will reflect. (7:176)
How evil is the parable of the folk who denied Our signs!
And they had been doing wrong to themselves. (7:177)
Whomever God guides, then, he is one who is truly guided.
And whomever He causes to go astray,
then, those, they are the ones who are losers. (7:178)
And, certainly, We made numerous for hell
many of the jinn and humankind.
They have hearts with which they understand not.
And they have eyes with which they perceive not.
And they have ears with which they hear not.
Those are like flocks. Nay!
They are ones who go astray.
Those, they are the ones who are heedless. (7:179)
To God belongs the Fairer Names,
so call to Him by them.
And forsake those who blaspheme His Names.
They will be given recompense

for what they had been doing. (7:180)
And of whom We created there is a community
that guides with The Truth,
and with it, it is just. (7:181)

COMMENTARY°

In this short passage we have the central issue of faith and human nature portrayed in a uniquely vivid scene that shows the generations of the faraway future, as they are still in the loins of human beings, before they make their appearance in this visible world. All of them are gathered in front of their Creator who asks them: *Am I not your Lord? And mention when your Lord took from the Children of Adam—from their generative organs—their offspring and called to them to witness of themselves: Am I not your Lord? They said: Yea! We bore witness so that you say not on the Day of Resurrection: Truly We had been ones who were heedless of this.* (7:172) They all acknowledge His Lordship, admit their position as obedient servants and His status as the only Lord. They are no bigger than small atoms held in the hand of the great Creator.

How did this event take place? How did God take the offspring of Adam's children from their loins to make them testify? How did He ask them: *Am I not your Lord?* And how did they reply: Yes, indeed. The answer to all these questions is that our human perception cannot understand how God acts, since it cannot perceive God's own nature. Perceiving the 'how' is subsequent to perceiving the nature of the one who does.

THE COVENANT

As the last creation of nature's Creator, we occupy a special place in nature because out of all of nature God breathes His Spirit within the human self alone. It is this infusion of the Divine Spirit that allows the us to become conscious of self, an advantage no other aspect of nature has. Therefore, even though all of nature, the universe, and the cosmos are divinely created from the combination of natural elements and their qualities, only the human form has "consciousness of self." Through this covenant, the human being becomes the trustee or representative of God on earth, accepts the trust of nature.

In terms of description, we see how those who have minds, ears and eyes, but understand nothing. At the same time there is an inspirational dimension whereby critical thinkers use their powers to reflect and think about the signs. When they become aware of: *They said: Yea! We bore witness* (7:172), they contemplate God's creation

and how in the distant past they had accepted that God was their Lord. However we imagine it to have been, God gives us the reason for the revelation of (7:172), *so that you not say on the Day of Resurrection: Truly, we had been ones who were heedless of this.*

One interpretation of this statement suggests that the pledge *And mention when your Lord took from the Children of Adam—from their generative organs—their offspring* (7:172) relates to their nature. He has established in their nature the tendency to acknowledge His Lordship as the only God in the universe. They grow up with this tendency until they deviate as a result of external factors of one sort or another.

In his commentary on the Quran, Ibn Kathir reports that many scholars are of the view that this testimony from the offspring of Adam's children refers to the fact that in their very nature, they have a tendency to accept God's Oneness. This is why the Quranic statement says: *And mention when your Lord took from the Children of Adam—from their generative organs—their offspring* rather than saying, from the loins of Adam himself or from his loins. And the statement speaks of *their offspring*, to indicate the succession of their generations, one after another.

This is similar to the Quranic statement: *It is He who has given you the earth to inherit.* (27:62)

God also says: *He brought you into being out of other people's seed.* (6:133)

Here, in the sign we are discussing, God goes on to say: *And called to them to witness of themselves: Am I not your Lord?* (7:172) This means that He has created them admitting this fact, testifying to it at the very moment of their existence.

Scholars also say that testimony is sometimes given verbally as in the Quranic sign: *They will reply: We bear witness against ourselves. The life of this world has beguiled them. So they will bear witness against themselves that they were ungrateful.* (6:130)

At other times, the testimony can be made by adopting a certain position or attitude, as that described in the Quranic sign stating: *It is not for the idolaters to visit or tend God's houses of worship, while they bear witness against themselves for being ungrateful.* (9:17) This means that their situation testifies against them, not that they make a statement to this effect.

The same applies to the Quranic signs: *The human being is surely ungrateful to his Lord, and of this he himself is a witness.* (100:6-100:7)

Requests also can be made verbally or by adopting a particular position. This is evidenced by the Quranic sign stating: *He gives you of everything you ask Him for.* (14:34) Scholars say that a factor that

supports this view is the fact that this testimony is counted against them as they associate partners with God. Had this taken place in the way some people suggest, then everyone would have remembered it, and it would have been taken against them. It is suggested that its being reported by the Prophet is sufficient as a proof of its taking place.

This is true, but we should remember that those who were ungrateful rejected everything that God's Messengers have stated. Since this is stated as an argument against them, it must be a reference to their nature, which admits God's Lordship and oneness. For this reason, the Quranic passage goes on to say: *Or you not say: Our fathers before us ascribed partners with God. We had been offspring after them. Shall You cause us to perish for what the ones who dealt in falsehood accomplished?* (7:173)

For our part, we do not exclude the possibility that the event related in this Quranic sign took place as is described, i.e. literally: (7:172) We believe that it could easily happen as God has described, because there is nothing to stop it happening when God wills. But at the same time we do not exclude the interpretation outlined by Ibn Kathir and approved by other scholars.

Had God's knowledge shown that nature and reason were sufficient for people to follow the right path without sending them messengers and messages, He might have made these the basis of accountability. But God's grace has dictated that this basis must be His message: *And, thus, We explain Our signs distinctly so that perhaps they will return.* (7:174)

And recount to them the tiding of him to whom We gave Our signs, but he cast himself off from them. So Satan pursued him then, he had been among the ones who are in error. (7:175)

When the last scene of a dog always panting away is raised before our eyes, we have the highly significant comment on the whole panorama: *And if We willed, We would have exalted him with them, but he inclined towards the earth, and followed his own desires. And his parable is like the parable of a dog. If you will attack it, it pants. Or if you will leave it, it pants. That is the parable of the folk, those who denied Our signs. Then, relate these narratives so that perhaps they will reflect. How evil is the parable of the folk who denied Our signs! And they had been doing wrong to themselves.* (7:176-7:177)

Can there be a more dismal example than that? *How evil is the parable of the folk who denied Our signs! And they had been doing wrong to themselves.* (7:177) Can there be a worse action than discarding guidance and pulling oneself away from divine revelations? Is there anything more disgraceful than clinging to the lowly life of

this earth and succumbing to desires? Can any human being cause himself more wrong than the one who does this? By so doing, he tears apart that protective shield which could have ensured his safety. Instead, he leaves his soul easy prey for Satan and sinks to the level of animals, with all that it entails of worry and uncertainty. He is soon seen as a dog constantly panting away.

The section then makes a short pause to comment on the example provided in this scene of a person to whom God has given His revelations, but who discards them. In this comment, the section tells us that true guidance is provided by God alone: *Whomever God guides, then, he is one who is truly guided. And whomever He causes to go astray, then, those, they are the ones who are losers.* (7:178) God certainly guides those who make an effort to find guidance.

God says in another section: *Those who strive for Us, We shall certainly guide along Our ways.* (29:69) He also says elsewhere in the Quran: *God does not change the condition of a certain people until they themselves initiate change.* (13:11) He further says: *By the soul and its molding and inspiration with knowledge of wickedness and piety. Successful is the one who keeps it pure, and ruined is the one who corrupts it.* (91:7-91:10)

Similarly, God lets go astray anyone who wishes to go astray. He allows him to turn away from the elements of guidance and pointers to the right faith, sealing his heart, ears and eyes in order that he does not hear, see or understand: *And, certainly, We made numerous for hell many of the jinn and humankind. They have hearts with which they understand not. And they have eyes with which they perceive not. And they have ears with which they hear not. Those are like flocks. Nay! They are ones who go astray. Those, they are the ones who are heedless.* (7:179)

The sign tells us: Open your heart and mind. Have their not traveled in the land so as to endow their hearts with understanding? The emphasis here on the faculty of reason and understanding, suggesting that not all of our information about nature comes directly from sensation for if that were the case we would be no different from animals.

This section follows this with a clear instruction to the believers to ignore those who deviate from the right path and go astray. At the time of the Prophet, those were the ungrateful who used to maintain idolatry in opposition to the Quranic message. They used to blaspheme against God's names, twist His attributes, and assign them to some of the idols they ascribe as partners to God: *To God belongs the Fairer Names, so call to Him by them. And forsake those who blaspheme His Names. They will be given recompense for what they had been doing.* (7:180)

The Arabic word in this Quranic sign which is translated here as '*blaspheme His Names*' signifies also twisting and distortion. The idolaters among the Arabs distorted God's fine names and gave them to their alleged deities. They distorted the name God so as to call one of their idols al-Lat, and twisted His attribute, al-Aziz, which means the Mighty, to call another idol, al-Uzza. The Quranic sign states clearly that these fine names and attributes belong to God alone. It instructs the believers to call Him alone by these names, without any distortion or twisting. They are also instructed to ignore the twisters who have gone far astray, and not to bother about them. They are left to God who determines their punishment. This is a very serious warning indeed.

And of whom We created there is a community that guides with The Truth, and with it, it is just. (7:181)

Humanity would not have deserved any honor had it not been for the fact that there will always be, even in the worst circumstances, that community which God calls by its Quranic term, *ummah*. By definition, the *ummah* is a community which believes in the same faith that remains its basic bond, and obeys the same leadership that supervises the implementation of that faith. It is then the community that adheres to, and implements the truth, in all situations.

It is the guardian of God's trust, the witness to His covenant with people, and it is the community to provide God's evidence against those who go astray turning their backs on His covenant.

The description given here of this community deserves reflection. *And of whom We created there is a community that guides with The Truth, and with it, it is just.* (7:181) This community will continue to be present at all times, even though it may at certain periods be very small in number. Its main characteristic is that those who belong to it: *And of whom We created there is a community that guides with The Truth, and with it, it is just.* (7:181) They call on people to accept the truth, and will never relinquish their task of advocating the truth. They are not happy to keep it to themselves, or to be inward looking. They try to publicize the truth they know, and guide other people to it. Thus, they have a role of leadership among those around them who have strayed away from this truth, and who have violated their covenant. They adopt a positive attitude, which is not limited to knowing the truth but goes beyond that knowledge in order to advocate the truth and guide to it.

But this is not all that they do about the truth. Their other characteristic is that they 'establish justice' with the truth. This means that they go well beyond knowing the truth and advocating it, to take positive steps to implement the truth in human life and make it the

criterion for judgment in order to establish justice that cannot be based on anything other than the truth.

The crux of the matter is that the truth has not been revealed only to remain a mere branch of knowledge studied by scholars, or even an admonition to point out the right path. The truth has been revealed so that people conduct their lives according to it. It should govern people's concepts so that these are molded in accordance with it, and it should govern people's rites of worship so that these provide a practical image of the truth in as far as the relationship between human beings and their Lord is concerned.

QUESTIONS

Under what circumstances do you think with a bias in favor of yourself?
Did you ever become irritable over small things?
Did you do or say anything "irrational" to get your way?
Did you try to impose your will upon others?
Did you ever fail to speak your mind when you felt strongly about something and then later feel resentment?
What would a rational person feel in this or that situation?
What would a rational person do?
How does that compare with what I want to do?

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 7:172-7:181

WHO IS GOD?

God explains distinctly His signs so that perhaps those who have gone astray will return. Whomever God guides is one who is truly guided. Those whom He causes to go astray are losers. God has made many of the jinn and humans for hell. To God belongs the Fairer Names. Call Him by them and forsake those who blaspheme His Names. God will recompense them for what they do.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Prophet is told to mention when his Lord took from the generative organs of the Children of Adam their offspring and called them to bear witness to Him, which they did. He is told to tell of the story of he who cast off God's signs and was then pursued by Satan. He followed his own desires and is like a dog that pants.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

Say not: My fathers were idolaters before. Will God cause to perish what their fathers had done? Those who are losers do not have hearts with which they understand nor eyes with which they perceive nor ears by which they

hear. They go astray. They are heedless. And there is a community that God created that guides to the Truth and with it, it is just.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message tells us that we, as Children of Adam, have born witness that God is our Lord. How did we bear witness? Through our generative organs that created our offspring. So that we not say on the Day of Resurrection that we were unaware that God was our Lord. That our innate nature has already born witness to the One God. That we are all Children of Adam. We cannot say that we are unaware of having borne witness to our Lord.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I realized that I sometimes think with a bias in favor of myself.
I realized I sometimes become irritable over small things.
I realized that I have sometimes said something 'irrational' to get my way.
I realized I have sometimes tried to impose my will upon others.
I remembered I have sometimes failed to speak my mind when I felt strongly about something and then later felt resentment.

LESSON 39(12). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (*TAQWA*)

WHAT IS GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (*TAQWA*)?

The Quran is revealed to produce this attitude of God-consciousness among people: an Arabic Recitation without any crookedness so that perhaps they would be God-conscious. (39:28) It is the presence of this moral attitude which saves people from destruction (27:53; 41:18) and it is this which helps them maintain God's commands in their conjugal life, (2:24; 4:129) in sacrifice, (5:30; 22:37) in different aspects of social life, (2:177) and in fulfilling faithfully their social obligations. (25:63-25:74)

To be God-conscious (*muttaqi*) (to guard against evil) is to exhibit virtuous conduct: *It is not virtuous conduct that you turn your faces towards the East or the West. Rather virtuous conduct consists of: Whoever believes in God and the Last Day, and the angels, and the Book, and the Prophets. Proof of belief in the One God is in one's actions, behavior or practicing of this belief which includes, among other practices: The practice of good deeds: to spend out of one's substance, out of love for God, for kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, for the ransom of prisoners-of-war; to be steadfast in prayers, and to pay the purifying alms* (zakat)*; to fulfill the contracts which have been made; and to be firm and patient in pain (or suffering), adversity, and times of danger. Such people as follow these are possessed of true God-consciousness.* (2:177-2:178)

The better and more lasting reward of the Lord is for those who believe and put their trust in Him; those who avoid the greater crimes and shameful deeds, and, even when they are angry, they forgive; those who hearken to their Lord, and establish regular prayer; who conduct their affairs by mutual consultation; who spend out of what God bestows on them for sustenance; who, when an oppressive wrong is inflicted on them, (are not cowed but) help and defend themselves; and those who recompense injury with injury in degree equal thereto and, better still, forgive and make reconciliation. But indeed if any do help and defend themselves after a wrong is done to them, against such there is no cause of blame. The blame is only against those who oppress people with wrongdoing and insolently transgress beyond bounds through the land, defying right and justice; for such there will be a grievous penalty. But indeed showing patience and forgiveness is an exercise of courageous will and resolution in the conduct of affairs. God-consciousness results in developing a sense of humility.

WHAT IS HUMILITY?

Critical thinkers recognize that there is a limit of their knowledge. They are sensitive to their being self-centered and egocentric as they know that this

will only increase their self-deception. They are aware of bias and prejudice in their views. The basis of humility is to be able to avoid claiming to know more than they actually know. The presence of humility implies a lack of arrogance, conceit or pretentiousness as well as implying that we have insight into the basis for our beliefs. You learn to know what evidence you have, how you came to believe something and what additional evidence you would need. This indicates that as Quranic critical thinkers you know what you know as well as what you do not know.

If this insight and this humility is part of our goal, as the Quran encourages it, the extent and nature of Quranic coverage for most grade levels and subjects does not imply that bits and pieces of knowledge be easily attained, without any significant consideration of the basis for the knowledge claimed in the sacred text. You must think in an extended way about content before giving assent to what is claimed. As the Quran fosters critical thinking, it does not foster intellectual arrogance. In the Quranic context, humility is fostered through the concept of repentance. Though the human being is by nature after the pattern of God's nature (30:30) and, therefore, capable of approximating to the ideal embodied in the most beautiful names, yet being prone to different weaknesses he is often led to wrong his soul in spite of his best efforts to follow moral discipline.

Critical thinkers bring about humility by continually asking themselves: How could I know whether or not this is true? To suspend judgment until they find out more about a situation does not make them uncomfortable. Humility, therefore, is suspending judgment and having a consciousness of the limits of one's knowledge, including a sensitivity to circumstances in which one's native egocentrism is likely to function self-deceptively; sensitivity to bias, prejudice, and limitations of one's viewpoint. Humility depends on recognizing that one should not claim more than one actually knows. It does not imply spinelessness or submissiveness. It implies the lack of intellectual pretentiousness, boastfulness, or conceit, combined with insight into the logical foundations, or lack of such foundations, of one's beliefs.

> Lacking any sense of humility, the ungrateful Quraysh, at the beginning of the public call to the Quranic message, namely Utba and Shayba, both sons of Rabia ibn Abd al-Shams along with Abu Sufyan ibn Harb, Abu al-Bakhtari (whose name is al-As ibn Hisham ibn al-Harith ibn Asad and al-Aswad ibn al-Muttalib ibn Asad) Abu Jahl (whose name is Amr) ibn Hisham ibn al Mughayra, al-Walid ibn al-Mughayra and Nubayh and Munabbih, two sons of al-Hajjaj ibn Amir ibn Hudhayfa along with al-As ibn Wail, decide to do something to try to make Abu Talib relinquish his support of his nephew. To further these ends, they call upon him several times with this purpose in mind. The Quraysh leaders, who had fallen into a state of

fear and envy because of the growth of the numbers of Muhammad's followers, decide to go to Abu Talib who is the leader in Makkah. Abu Talib is known among the tribes as a most honored and respected leader.

In the meeting, they say: Your nephew rejects our idols and reproaches our faith. He laughs at our beliefs. He considers our ancestors to have gone astray. Tell him to either withdraw this invitation or you will withdraw your support from him.

Abu Talib, controlling his passions, tells them very calmly that he cannot do that. They somehow decide not to pursue the issue at that point. However, as people continue to come, the Quraysh become more concerned than ever. Once again they go to Abu Talib and say: Abu Talib, you are superior to us in regard to age, nobility, and position. We have asked you previously to stop your nephew from preaching this new faith, but you have done nothing. We will bear it no longer. We will not sit by and watch someone insult the way of our fathers or reproach our gods. You must make him stop or we will arise against you and one of us will be destroyed.

It is because of this that Abu Talib now speaks to his nephew and tells him what has happened. The Messenger speaks his well-known words in response which shows his steadfastness and perseverance upon this way. He says: My uncle! I swear by God that if they were to place the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left, as the price for me to stop my call, I would never agree to do so until the day that God makes our faith victorious or I myself die in attempting to do so.

The eyes of the Messenger fill with tears as he speaks. Then he gets up to go.

His beloved uncle calls him and says: Come here, my nephew.

The Messenger draws near. Abu Talib says to him: Go. Proclaim your invitation. Let me know whatever it is that you need. I will protect you as long as I am alive.

And Abu Talib kept his promise.

QURANIC CHAPTER 7: THE ELEVATED PLACES (AL-ARAF) SIGNS 7:182-7:188

Makkah: *And those who denied Our signs,*
We will draw them on gradually
from where they will not know. (7:182)
And I will grant them indulgence for awhile.

Truly, My strategizing is sure. (7:183)
Reflect they not?
There is no madness in their companion.
He is but a clear warner. (7:184)
Expect they not in the kingdom
of the heavens and the earth
and whatever things God created
that perhaps their term be near?
Then, in which discourse after this
will they believe? (7:185)
Whomever God causes to go astray
then, there is no one who guides him.
And He forsakes them in their defiance,
wandering unwilling to see. (7:186)
They ask you about the Hour, when will it berth?
Say: The knowledge of that is only with my Lord.
None will display its time but He.
It was heavy, hidden in the heavens and the earth.
It will approach you not but suddenly.
They will ask you as if you had been
one who is well-informed about it.
Say: The knowledge of that is only with God,
but most of humanity knows not. (7:187)
Say: I rule not over myself either for profit or for hurt,
but what God willed.
And if the unseen had been known to me,
I would have acquired much good
and evil would not have afflicted me.
I am but a warner
and a bearer of good tidings
to a folk who believe. (7:188)

COMMENTARY°

This section goes on to describe other types of people, telling us about a community which holds fast to the truth and calls on people to believe in it, and implement it with determination and conscientiousness. At the other extreme there is a community of people who deny the truth and reject God's revelations. This section tells us clearly that the first community exists without a shred of doubt. They guard the truth and hold tight to it when other people abandon it and deviate far away from it. When others reject the truth as a lie, they remain steadfast. This section further explains that the others shall have a dreadful end, as God will punish them through His mighty

schemes: *And those who denied Our signs, We will draw them on gradually from where they will not know. And I will grant them indulgence for awhile. Truly, My strategizing is sure.* (7:182-7:183)

Have they not thought things over? Their companion is no madman. He is only a plain warner. Have they not considered [God's] dominion over the heavens and the earth, and all that God has created, and [reflected] that it may well be that their own term is drawing near? In what other message after this will they, then, believe? *Reflect they not? There is no madness in their companion. He is but a clear warner. Expect they not in the kingdom of the heavens and the earth and whatever things God created that perhaps their term be near? Then, in which discourse after this will they believe?* (7:184-7:185)

The Quran shakes them and wakes them up in order to rescue their nature, minds and feelings from the pressures that weigh heavily on them. It addresses their humanity with all its systems of reception and response. It does not make an academic argument, but tries to address their whole nature: *Reflect they not? There is no madness in their companion. He is but a clear warner.* (7:184)

In their propaganda campaign against the Messenger Muhammad, the notables of the Quraysh tried to deceive the public by saying that Muhammad was a madman who uttered strange words, unfamiliar to normal human beings.

The Quran calls on them to consider and reflect: They had known this companion of theirs, i.e. the Messenger Muhammad, (peace be upon him), for a long time and they had never experienced any fault with him. Indeed, they themselves testified to his honesty, truthfulness and wisdom. They accepted him as an arbiter when a quarrel erupted between them over which tribe was to have the honor of putting the Black Stone back in its position. They accepted his judgment which spared them a potentially very costly battle. They trusted him with their valuables which they kept in his custody until the day when he left Makkah to migrate to Madinah. His cousin, Ali returned every valuable article to its owner.

The Quran calls on them to consider and reflect on all this. They had known Muhammad for a very long time and were fully aware of his character. Was he a man to experience any madness? Were any of his words or actions indicative of madness? Certainly not: (7:184) There is certainly nothing wrong with his mind or with his speech. He speaks plainly to warn people about what is awaiting them. His statements could never be confused with those of mad people and his actions were certainly the actions of a very wise person.

And then comes this inviting question: This: (7:185) serves as another deeply touching call. They are invited to open their eyes and

hearts to this vast kingdom with all that it contains. Reflection with open heart and mind is sufficient to revive human nature and make it receptive to the truth underlined by God's inimitable creation and all its miraculous aspects testifying to its being the work of God, the only Creator. Reflection over anything God has created—and His creation is so greatly varied in the kingdoms of heaven and earth—is bound to leave both heart and mind in a genuine state of speechless amazement. The mind will then start to look for the origin of this creation, and the power that has made it all in such a perfect system.

Those who go astray do so because they choose not to consider and reflect: *Whomever God causes to go astray then, there is no one who guides him. And He forsakes them in their defiance, wandering unwilling to see.* (7:186) When people turn their minds away from the signs placed by God in the universe, they will be left to go astray.

Some of those arrogant, misguided and blind people who prefer not to see what is around them, questioned the Messenger about the final Hour, the timing of which God has chosen not to reveal. They are the same as the one who does not see what is under his feet but wants to see what lies beyond the horizon. Therefore, their questioning: *They ask you about the Hour, when will it berth? Say: The knowledge of that is only with my Lord. None will display its time but He. It was heavy, hidden in the heavens and the earth. It will approach you not but suddenly. They will ask you as if you had been one who is well-informed about it. Say: The knowledge of that is only with God, but most of humanity knows not.* (7:187)

The call to believe in the hereafter and its related concept of punishment and reward came as a complete surprise to the idolatrous Arabs. Although this concept is fundamental to Abraham's faith, the ancestor of those idolatrous people, and also to the faith of their noble father, Ishmael, their links with the faith of submission to God preached by Abraham and Ishmael were completely severed. The concept of the hereafter had been erased from their minds and they received it again with total amazement and complete surprise. They wondered at the Messenger Muhammad because he told them about life after death, resurrection, reckoning, punishment and reward.

But this does not apply to knowledge of the Hour only. It applies to everything in the realm which lies beyond the reach of human perception. It is God alone who knows all that there is in that realm. He has to choose his actions, and then the result takes place as God has determined: *Say: I rule not over myself either for profit or for hurt, but what God willed. And if the unseen had been known to me, I would have acquired much good and evil would not have afflicted*

me. I am but a warner and a bearer of good tidings to a folk who believe. (7:188)

With this declaration, the monotheism of the Quranic message is completely and absolutely purged of every trace of idolatry of whatever shape or form. God has His unique attributes in which no human being has any share, not even Muhammad, God's chosen and beloved Messenger. Human power and knowledge stop at the point of the unseen, which is the Quranic term for what lies beyond the reach of human perception. Within the limitations of humanity, God's Messenger himself stands, and his role is well-defined: (7:188)

Chapter 7 then turns to the ungrateful in Makkah who were denying the truth of the Quranic message, distorting God's names in order to coin up names for their false deities. It warns them against suffering God's punishment. It also invites them to reflect deeply and clearly on the status of God's Messenger who called on them to follow divine guidance. When they do so, they should remove their prejudices that cause them to accuse the Prophet of madness. They should contemplate the kingdoms of heaven and earth and what they contain of pointers to the truth of divine guidance. A touch is added reminding them of death that could come when they are totally unaware.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 7:182-7:188

WHO IS GOD?

God will draw on gradually those who denied the signs of God. They need to reflect on what they are doing. Whomever God causes to go astray, there is no one who guides him.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quranic message clearly states that there is no madness in the Prophet, but that he is a clear warner. There are those who ask Prophet Muhammad when the Hour will come. The Quranic message tells him to say that the knowledge of that is only with his Lord or with God. He repeats this twice. He is told to say that he rules over himself neither for profit or for hurt, but only what God wills. He adds that if he had known the unseen, he would have acquired much good and no evil would ever have afflicted him. He is but a warner and a bearer of good tidings to those who believe.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts**

(vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message is for Prophet Muhammad to state clearly that the knowledge of the Hour is only with God. How does the Prophet state this? He is told twice to say that the knowledge of the hour is only with his Lord, God. If the Prophet had knowledge of the unseen and of the Hour he would have been able to profit much from this knowledge, showing that clearly he lacks this knowledge that is only with his Lord. The Hour refers to the Day of Judgment. All of humanity should prepare for that Day that God has promised will come. That only God will display the time of the Hour.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to come up with questions and state each one clearly.
I figured out what things I had to do to answer it.
I was able to distinguish between questions over which I had control and ones over which I did not have control.
I was able to figure out the information I needed and I actively sought that information.
I carefully analyzed and interpreted the information I collected and was able to draw reasonable inferences from it.

Lesson 39(13). Critical Thinking Quranic Moral Trait Empowering Constancy, Courage

How do I develop courage (determination, constancy)?

In order to develop courage, you need to question what you learn. It takes courage on your part to admit that some ideas are dangerous and lack truth and to be true to your own thinking, questioning beliefs that you hold deeply. Courage is required to not conform to ideas that you know to be false.

It is the primary duty of the believers to participate actively in the struggle for the establishment of a social order based on peace, harmony, and justice: *And fight them until there be no persecution, and the way of life be for God. Then, if they refrained themselves, then, there is to be no deep seated dislike, but against the ones who are unjust. Fight aggression* (2:193) in which everybody is equal before the law, and people in authority work out their policies after ascertaining the views of the people. *And those who responded to their Lord and performed their formal prayer and their affairs are by counsel among themselves, and who spend of what We provided them.* (42:38)

Courage is having a consciousness of the need to face and fairly address ideas, beliefs, or viewpoints toward which you have strong negative emotions and to which you have not given a serious hearing. This courage is connected with the recognition that ideas considered dangerous or absurd are sometimes rationally justified (in whole or in part) and that conclusions and beliefs inculcated in us are sometimes false or misleading.

In this endeavor to realize the moral law in his individual and social life, the human being has often to contend against evil forces represented in the person of Satan. (15:35-15:40) But it is within his power to resist and overcome them. (6:99) Though the human being is always prone to weakness and susceptible to seduction by the forces of evil, yet his weakness is rectifiable under the guidance of revelation, (2:36) and such people as follow the law of God-consciousness shall be immune from these lapses (3:175) or be cowardly in their behavior. (3:122)

The struggle against the forces of evil and oppression demands that its participants must be characterized by perseverance, courage, fearlessness, and trust in God—the moral qualities which are described by the Quran as characteristic of the righteous in the social context. *And have patience, for, truly, God wastes not the compensation of the ones who are doers of good.* (11:115); those who are firm and steadfast will never lose heart, nor weaken in will, nor give in before the enemy. And how many a Prophet whom, along with him, many thousands fought, but none lost confidence with what lit on them in the way of God, nor were they weakened nor were they to give in. *And God loves the ones who remain steadfast.* (3:146)

To determine for yourself which is which, you must not passively and

uncritically 'accept' what you have 'learned'. Courage comes into play here, because inevitably you will come to see some truth in some ideas considered dangerous and absurd, and distortion or falsity in some ideas strongly held in your social group. You need courage to be true to your own thinking in such circumstances. The penalties for non-conformity can be severe.

Similarly, trust in God is the moral quality of all believers. The ones who believe are only those whose hearts took notice when God was remembered. *When His signs were recounted to them, their belief increased and they put their trust in the Lord—* (8:2) After you have taken all possibilities into consideration and made a decision, put your trust in God. ... *when you are resolved, then, put your trust in God. Truly, God loves the ones who put their trust in Him.* (3:159)

To be independent Quranic thinkers who are fair, we often have to deal with unpopular ideas, beliefs and points of view. This requires courage on our part not to fear the reproach that others may use against us. Courage as a human ideal implies that the human being has the potentiality of assuming responsibility undertaken by him of his own accord. He has all the faculties that are necessary for his physical and spiritual development. He is given the power of courage to distinguish between good and evil: *Truly, We guided him on the way, whether he be one who is thankful or ungrateful.* (76:3) and, therefore, he alone is responsible for what he does. *No burdened soul will bear another's heavy load.* (6:164) He is endowed with freedom of action, but his freedom is limited by the free causality of God. *No indeed! Truly, it is an admonition. So let whoever willed, remember it. But they will not remember unless God wilis. He is Worthy of God-consciousness and He is Worthy of granting The Forgiveness.* (74:54–56) *His responsibility is proportionate to his powers; he has been shown the path of God-consciousness and it is up to him to accept its lead or reject it. Truly, We guided him on the way, whether he be one who is thankful or ungrateful.* (76:3)

WHAT IS TO LITTLE COURAGE?

Cowardice or weakness is an obstacle to courage. It is wrong to show weakness in face of difficulties, to lose heart, to be weak in will, to be weary and faint-hearted, to despair or boast, to be impatient and fretful. It is forbidden to be afraid of men or of Satan and his protectors. *It is only Satan who frightens you with his protectors. So fear them not, but fear Me if you had been ones who believe.* (3:175)

WHAT IS TOO MUCH COURAGE?

There are certain obstacles which arise out of misuse of courage, that is, too much courage. Warning is given to those people who oppress people with wrong-doing and insolently transgress beyond bounds through the land, defying right and justice. *The way is only against those who do wrong to hu-*

manity and are insolent in and on the earth unrightfully. Those, for them is a painful punishment. (42:42) It is forbidden to exhibit fierceness: Mention when those who were ungrateful laid zealotry in their hearts, like the zealotry of the Age of Ignorance. *Then, God caused to descend His tranquility on His Messenger and on the ones who believe and fastened on them the Word of God-consciousness. They had been with right to it and were more worthy of it.* (48:26) to be arrogant against God: *And rise not up against God. Truly, I am one who arrives with a clear authority* (44:19) for arrogance blinds people to the truth: *And they negated them—although their souls confessed to them—out of injustice and self-exaltation. So look on how had been the Ultimate End of the ones who make corruption.* (27:14) to swell one's cheek with pride, or walk in insolence through the earth: *And turn not your cheek away from humanity nor walk through the earth exultantly. Truly, God loves not any proud boaster.* (31:18) for one cannot rend the earth asunder or reach the mountains in height.

WHAT IS ARROGANCE AND TRANSGRESSION?

Arrogant and obstinate transgressors: ... *those who dispute the signs of God without any authority having approached them. It is troublesome, repugnant with God and with those who believed. Thus, God sets a seal on every heart of one who increases in pride, haughtiness,* (40:35) vainglorious people: *Truly, God loves not ones who had been proud, boastful,* (4:36) *those fond of self glory: Nay! Those who were ungrateful are in vainglory and breach.* (38:2) people rebellious and wicked: *And He caused to be detestable to you ingratitude and disobedience and rebellion.* (49:7) and vying with one another in pomp and gross rivalry: *Know that this present life is only a pastime, a diversion and an adornment and a mutual boasting among you and a rivalry in respect to wealth and children as the likeness of plenteous rain water. The plants impressed ones who are ungrateful. Again, it withers; then, you have seen it yellowing. Again, it becomes chaff while in the world to come there is severe punishment and forgiveness from God and contentment. And this present life is nothing but a delusion of enjoyment.* (57:20) are held out as examples of those who misuse their power. Satan is condemned to everlasting punishment for abusing power and becoming haughty.

WHAT IS A MISUSE OF POWER?

Some people try to cover their misuse of power under the cloak of determinism: And those who ascribed partners with God said: *If God willed neither would we have worshiped other than Him anything, we nor our fathers, nor would we have held sacred anything other than what He forbade.* (16:35) but the Quran repudiates this stand as totally unrealistic. *Say: God has the conclusive disputation. And if He willed, He would have guided you one and all.* (6:149) The human being has the power to shape his destiny in the light of

the truth of revelation. *And whenever guidance approaches you from Me, then, whoever heeded My guidance, then, there will be neither fear in them nor will they feel remorse.* (2:38)

Quranic Chapter 7: The Elevated Places (al-Araf)
Signs 7:189-7:206

Makkah: *It is He Who created you*
from a single soul.
And out of it made its spouse that he rest in her.
And when he laid over her, she carried a light burden
and moved about with it.
But when she was weighed down,
they both called to God their Lord saying:
If You would give us one in accord with morality,
we will certainly be
among the ones who are thankful. (7:189)[13]
Then, when He gave them both one in accord with morality,
they made ascribed associates with Him
in what He gave them both.
God was Exalted above partners they ascribe! (7:190)
Ascribe they partners with God who create nothing
and are themselves created? (7:191)
And they are not able to help them
nor help themselves? (7:192)
And if you call them to the guidance,
they will not follow you.
It is equal whether you called to them
or you be ones who remain quiet. (7:193)
Truly, those whom you call to other than God
are servants like you.
So call to them and let them respond to you
if you had been ones who are sincere. (7:194)
Have they feet by which they walk?
Or have they hands by which they seize by force?
Or have they eyes by which they perceive?
Or have they ears by which they hear?
Say: Call you to your ascribed associates.
Again, try to outwit me and give me no respite. (7:195)
Truly, God is my protector,
Who sent down the Book.
And He takes into His protection

the ones in accord with morality. (7:196)
And those whom you call to other than Him,
they are not able to help you,
nor are they able to help themselves. (7:197)
And if you call them to the guidance, they hear not.
You have seen them look on you,
but they perceive not. (7:198)
Take what you can spare and command what is honorable.
And turn aside from the ones who are ignorant. (7:199)
But if enmity is sown by Satan in you, sowing enmity,
then, seek refuge in God.
Truly, He is Hearing, Knowing. (7:200)
Truly, those who were God-conscious
when they were touched by a visitation from Satan,
they recollected.
That is when they were ones who perceive. (7:201)
And their brothers/sisters cause them to increase in error,
and, again,
they never stop short. (7:202)
When you have not approached them with a sign, they said:
Why had you not improvised one?
Say: I follow only what is revealed to me from my Lord.
This is clear evidence from your Lord and guidance
and mercy for a folk who believe. (7:203)
And when the Quran was recited, listen and pay heed
so that perhaps you will find mercy. (7:204)*
And remember your Lord in yourself humbly
and with awe instead of openly publishing the sayings
at the first part of the day and the eventide.
And be you not among the ones who are heedless. (7:205)
Truly, those who are with your Lord
grow not arrogant from His worship.
And they glorify Him
and they prostrate themselves to Him. (7:206)

COMMENTARY°

Within the context of this confrontation with the ungrateful, the section gives an outline of the nature of idolatry and the story of deviation from the covenant made with human nature to always believe in God's Oneness. It shows how such deviation occurs within us, as if it is describing the deviation of that very generation which opposed the Prophet, while their early ancestors followed Abraham's faith: (7:189-7:192)

Since it aims to describe the situation of those particular idolaters whom the Quran was addressing at the time of its revelation, the section moves immediately from the case it outlines to a direct address to them. It directs the Prophet to challenge them and their deities: (7:193-7:198)

The Quranic account describes the stages of deviation in human beings. The idolaters at the time of the Prophet Muhammad and prior to his time, used to pledge their children to serve their deities or be servants in temples and houses of worship. They did so in order to gain favor with God. Although at the beginning they used to turn to God alone, they then deflected from the summit of believing in God's oneness and fell into the depths of abject idolatry. In their error, they used to pledge their children to such idols and deities, hoping that by doing so their children would have a healthy life and would be protected against dangers. It is the same as some people do today when they make pledges to saints dedicating to them certain parts of their children's bodies. Some people may keep a boy's hair to grow, pledging that his first hair cut will be undertaken at the tomb or shrine of a saint, or they keep the boy uncircumcised until his circumcision is undertaken at such a tomb or shrine. Yet these people acknowledge that God is one, but follow this acknowledgement with such idolatrous practices. Human beings remain the same.*Then, when He gave them both one in accord with morality, they made ascribed associates with Him in what He gave them both. God was Exalted above partners they ascribe!* (7:190) Rejected is all the idolatry they believe and practise.

Arab paganism was, as we have already explained, too foolish by the standards of any stage of the human intellect. Therefore, the Quran tries to alert the Arabs' minds to their folly as they ascribed divinity to such deities. Those idols did not have feet with which to walk, hands with which to grasp, eyes with which to see, or ears with which to hear. Yet they themselves had these senses. How could they then worship statues made of stone that could not even do the things they themselves could do? Sometimes they considered these idols as symbols of the angels or of their own forefathers. Yet these were creatures like themselves who could not create anything or give support to anyone, because they themselves are created and cannot help themselves. At the end of this argument, God directs His Messenger to challenge them together with all their powerless deities, and to declare his clear faith, acknowledging the patronage of God alone: (7:191-7:194)

This is the type of challenge, which an advocate of the true faith would throw to tribal honor. God's Messenger said it exactly as his

Lord directed him, and put the challenge to all his contemporary idolaters and their alleged deities: *Have they feet by which they walk? Or have they hands by which they seize by force? Or have they eyes by which they perceive? Or have they ears by which they hear? Say: Call you to your ascribed associates. Again, try to outwit me and give me no respite.* (7:195)

He invites them to muster all their scheming powers, and those of their deities, and to strike against him without waiting for a moment. As he threw out this challenge, he was fully confident, reassured that God would protect him against all their scheming: *Truly, God is my protector; Who sent down the Book. And He takes into His protection the ones in accord with morality.* (7:196)

He thus declares what sort of support He relies on. He simply trusts to God who has revealed the Book. By this revelation, God has indicated His will that His Messenger should confront people with the truth embodied in that Book, and that He has willed that this truth will triumph over all falsehood. He has also willed to protect his God-conscious servants who convey His message believing in its truthfulness. The same challenge should be thrown down by every advocate of God's message who follows in the footsteps of God's Messenger (peace be upon him). It is the same challenge everywhere and at all times: (7:195-7:197) An advocate of the divine faith must not rely on any earthly power, instead he must rely only on God's power. This will enable him to rise above all earthly powers.

This last passage of the section: (7:199-7:206) contains very important directives from God to those under His patronage, i.e. His Messenger and those who have accepted His message. They were still in Makkah, facing the onslaught of the ignorant society in Arabia, supported by ignorant, or tribal honor, societies all over the world. These directives define the attitude of the believers in their confrontation with tribal honor and human beings who have gone astray. God's Messenger is called upon to show forbearance and to encourage everything that simple human nature can recognize as good, without any need for complication or rigidity. He is further directed to turn away from the advocates of tribal honor and not to engage in futile argument with them. If they go beyond the limits of reason, so as to infuriate him by their obstinate attitude, and Satan stirs up this anger further, then he should seek refuge with God who alone can give him reassurance: (7:199-7:200)

The section takes a different approach in order to emphasize to the advocates of faith that they should face all situations with resigned acceptance, and they should remember God when they are angry so that Satan will not be able to get the better of them: *Truly,*

those who were God-conscious when they were touched by a visitation from Satan, they recollected. That is when they were ones who perceive. (7:201)

They suggest to the Prophet that he should pray to God to give them a miracle, or they even suggest to him that he himself should perform a miracle. To them, he should be able to do so, since he claims to be a Prophet. This shows that they do not understand the Prophet's role. They certainly could not appreciate his humble attitude towards his Lord, nor that he only takes what God gives him. He does not suggest approaches or measures to his Lord, nor does he initiate matters at his own behest. God orders him to explain this to them: *When you have not approached them with a sign, they said: Why had you not improvised one?.* (7:203)

The Prophet is also commanded to explain to them the nature of the Quran that has been revealed to him. If they would only consider the plain guidance that is contained in the Quran, they would certainly stop making foolish requests for signs and miracles: *Say: I follow only what is revealed to me from my Lord. This is clear evidence from your Lord and guidance and mercy for a folk who believe.* (7:203) It provides clear insight and it is an aspect of overflowing blessings and grace. But that is the case only for those who believe and avail themselves of its unending blessing.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 7:189-7:206

WHO IS GOD?

It is God who created us from a single soul. He is Hearing, Knowing.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quranic message tells Prophet Muhammad to tell the ungrateful to call to their ascribed partners with God, to try to outwit him and give him no respite, because God, who sent the revelation, is his protector. It is He who protects the ones in accord with morality. The message tells him to take what he can spare, command what is honorable and turn aside from the ones who are ignorant. If somehow enmity is sown in him by Satan, he should take refuge in God. When Prophet Muhammad does not approach them with a sign, the ungrateful ask him to improvise one. The Quran tells him to say: I follow only what is revealed to m e from my Lord. The Quran is clear evidence from your Lord and guidance and mercy for ones who believe. He tells the ungrateful to listen and pay heed to the recitation so that they perhaps find mercy. Prophet Muhammad is told to remember his Lord within himself humbly and with awe instead of openly publishing the signs at the first part of the day and at sunset. He should not be among the heedless. Those who are with him, who follow him, do not grow arrogant from worshipping God. They glorify God

and prostrate themselves to Him.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

There are those who ask for a child that will be in accord with morality and when God gives them such a child, they create associates with God, ascribe partners with God who themselves create nothing and are themselves created. Those that the ungrateful call to are not able to help either themselves or the ungrateful. Those whom they call to guidance will not follow them. Those who ascribe associates and partners with God are servants like the community of believers. The Quranic message then asks several questions about the ascribed partners: Have they feet by which they walk? Have they hands by which they seize by force? Have they eyes by which they perceive? Have they ears by which they hear? In regard to those who are God-conscious, when they are touched by a visitation from Satan, they recollect. It is they who are ones who perceive. But their brothers/sisters never cease trying to lead them astray.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message says to seek refuge in God from Satan and evil whisperings If we have thoughts of enmity, what should we do? The Quranic message says we should take refuge in God from Satan who may sow enmity within us or may visit us. Sometimes we have evil thoughts. We should recollect that we are having these thoughts and seek refuge in God from them. Evil thoughts are to be avoided. Evil thoughts can lead to depression and grief.

Seeking refuge in God helps avoid evil thoughts. .

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I kept an intellectual journal where I described a situation that was emotionally significant to me, that I deeply cared about.
I responded to the situation and wrote about it in my journal.
I realized what was going on in the situation.
I dug beneath the surface.
I assessed the implications of my analysis.
I learned more about myself.

LEARN TO EXPRESS YOUR FEELINGS?

Those who have been habitually praised for uncritically accepting others' claims may feel the rug pulled out from under them for a while when expected to think for themselves. Be emotionally supported in these circumstances and encouraged to express the natural hesitancy, discomfort, or anxiety you may experience so you may work your way through these feelings. A willingness to consider unpopular beliefs develops by degrees. You should exercise discretion beginning first with mildly unpopular rather than with extremely unpopular beliefs. If, during the course of the year, an idea or suggestion which at first sounded 'crazy' was proven valuable, you can later be reminded of it, and discuss it at length, and compare it to other events:

LESSON 40(1). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAITS PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS

WHAT IS PERSEVERANCE?

Perseverance is being willing and conscious of the need to pursue insights and truths despite difficulties, obstacles, and frustrations; a firm adherence to rational principles despite irrational opposition of others; a sense of the need to struggle with confusion and unsettled questions over an extended period of time in order to achieve deeper understanding or insight. This trait is undermined when others continually provide the answers, do your thinking for you or substitute easy tricks, algorithms, and short cuts for careful, independent thought.

WHAT IS PERSEVERANCE IN GOODNESS?

Perseverance in goodness is an attribute of God: *And whatever you have of divine blessing is from God.* (16:53) and, therefore, it becomes the duty of every person to obey his own impulse to good: *And whoever volunteered good, then, truly, God is One Who is Responsive, Knowing.* (2:158) He should do good as God has been good to all: do good even as God did good to you (28:77) and love those who do good: *And do good. Truly, God loves the ones who are doers of good.* (2:195) Believers hasten in every good work. As all prophets were quick in emulating good works, (21:90) so all people are advised to strive together (as in a race) towards all that is good: *Be forward, then, in good deeds.* (2:148) and virtuous. *All good things are for the believers; goodly reward in the hereafter and highest grace of God awaits those who are foremost in good deeds: some of them are ones who take the lead with good deeds by permission of God. That is the greater grace.* (35:32) Believers are advised to repel evil with what is better, for thereby enmity will change into warm friendship: *Drive back with what is fairer. Then, behold he who between you and between him was enmity as if he had been a protector, a loyal friend.* (41:34) It is often reflective in that students have to go back and think about similar problems that they had faced before and re-analyze them. They do not let difficulties, obstacles and frustrations stop them from pursuing truths with their insight (the capacity to gain an accurate and deep intuitive understanding of a person or thing).

HOW DO I LEARN TO PERSEVERE IN GOODNESS?

Perseverance can be developed by reviewing and discussing the kinds of difficulties that were inherent in previous problems worked on, exploring why it is necessary to struggle with them over an extended period. You should come to see mental struggle as crucial to Quranic learning by discovering its reward in genuine understanding. You should have some experiences slowly reading difficult Quranic signs or sections. If you are careful and stick to it, examining

it one word, phrase, and sentence at a time, you can master it. Such in-depth reading can be done as a class, sentence by sentence, with you interpreting and explaining as you go. Raise difficult problems again and again over the course of the year. Design long-term projects for which you must persevere. Of course, it is important to work on skills of breaking down complex problems into simpler components, so that you will see how to attack problems systematically. You can discuss experiences you have had wherein you came to understand something that at first baffled you, or seemed hopelessly confusing and frustrating.

WHAT IS THE GOLDEN RULE?

The Golden Rule is to treat others the way that you want to be treated which is to persevere in goodness without regard to how you are being treated.

WHAT IS WRONGDOING?

The Quran denounces the obstacle to persevering in goodness which is wrong-doing i. e., doing wrong and shameful deeds. The Quran forbids—all shameful and evil deeds and uses a very comprehensive term *zulm* to cover them all. The Quran refers to Satanic tendencies in the human being such as ungratefulness (7:10), hastiness (16:37), impatience (70:19-21), despair, and unbelief in times of adversity and pride and conceit in times of prosperity (11:9-10), quarrelsomeness (16:4), arrogance (75:31-40), greed of ever more and yet more (74:15), miserliness (17:100), transgression of the bounds of propriety (96:6), and false sense of self–sufficiency: *No indeed! The human being is, truly, defiant. He considered himself self-sufficient.* (96:6) These tendencies often lead to different forms of wrong-doing and, therefore, must be counteracted by all right–thinking people.

> The spread among the right-thinking people causes great anxiety among the Quraysh because it is undermining their status quo, their social system, their classes and own class privileges, their unjust way of dealing with people and their arrogance. For a third time they go to see Abu Talib: You have taken Muhammad as your son and you protect him. Is it possible for your to withdraw your support from him and take Walid ibn Mughayra as your son? The child Walid is a young man, poet, speaker, wise, and handsome.
>
> In the previous meeting Abu Talib had spoken to them most softly and calmly. This time, when faced with their suggestion, he speaks in angry tones to them in rightful anger and says: What a ridiculous suggestion! I give my son to you to destroy and take Walid and raise him? I swear by God that this suggestion is not worth even listening to.
>
> These negotiations of the Quraysh with Abu Talib and their ab-

surd suggestion shows that they understand nothing of the depths of the Messenger's call and Abu Talib's affection for him. None of these negotiations succeed in affecting either the morale of the Messenger nor the resolve of Abu Talib in his defense of his nephew.

QURANIC CHAPTER 72: THE JINN (AL-JINN)
SIGNS 72:1-72:19

Makkah: *Say: It was revealed to me*
that a group of jinn listened to me.
They said: Truly, we heard a wondrous Recitation. (72:1)
It guides to the right judgment, so we believed in it.
And we will never ascribe partners with our Lord anyone. (72:2)
Truly, He, exalted be the grandeur of our Lord.
He took no companion (f) to Himself, nor a son, (72:3)
and yet a foolish one among us had been saying
an outrageous lie about God! (72:4)
But we, truly, thought that the humankind,
nor the jinn would ever say a lie about God (72:5)
and that there had been men of humankind
who would take refuge with the masculine of the jinn,
but they increased them in vileness. (72:6)
And they thought as you thought,
that God will never raise up anyone. (72:7)
And we stretched towards the heaven.
Then, we found it was filled with stern guards
and burning flames. (72:8)
And we had been sitting in positions
having the ability to hear.
But whoever listens now
will find a burning flame
and watchers for him. (72:9)
And we were not informed
whether the worst was intended
for those who are on earth
or whether their Lord intended
for them right mindedness. (72:10)
There are among us, the ones in accord with morality.
And there are among us other than that.
We had been of ways differing from one another. (72:11)
And we, truly, thought that we will never be able to weaken God
on the earth and we will never weaken Him by flight. (72:12)
So, truly, when we heard the guidance,

we believed in it. And whoever believes in his Lord,
he will fear neither meagerness nor vileness. (72:13)
And, truly, we are the ones who submit to God.
Among us there are the ones who swerve from justice.
And whoever submitted to God, then,
those sought right mindedness. (72:14)
As for the ones who swerve from justice,
they had been as firewood for hell. (72:15)
If they went straight on the way,
We would have satiated them
with copious water (72:16)
so that We try them in it.
But whoever turns aside
from the Remembrance of his Lord,
He will dispatch him to a rigorous punishment. (72:17)
Truly, the places of prostration belong to God
so call not to anyone with God. (72:18)
And, truly, when the servant of God stood up, calling to Him,
they be about to swarm upon him. (72:19)

COMMENTARY°

SUPPORT FROM ANOTHER WORLD

This section presents a testimony to the truth of many aspects of the divine faith from a different world, a world beyond that of ours. These aspects were the subject of much argument by the ungrateful who either denied them or who arrived at assumptions lacking any supporting evidence. The ungrateful in Makkah sometimes alleged that Muhammad was in contact with the jinn who taught him what to say about faith. Now, a group of the jinn give their testimony, stating that they did not know anything about the Quran until they listened to Muhammad reciting it, and that they were then overwhelmed by its powerful truth. In fact, its effect on them was so profound that they could not remain silent. They had to speak in detail about what they had heard and felt. Their discourse reflects their total amazement at this great event with its lasting effects on the heavens, the earth, humans, jinn, angels and stars. Indeed, its effects cover the entire universe. Their testimony undoubtedly has a strong effect on us as well.

Moreover, the jinns' statement corrects many aspects of superstition upheld by those addressed by the section for the first time, and by many other people across successive generations. It presents clear facts about this type of Gods creatures, without any exaggeration. The Arabs who were the first to be addressed by the Quran be-

lieved that the jinn exercised much power on earth. When an Arab found himself at night in a valley or an open plain, he would seek refuge with the jinn of that place, saying: I seek refuge with the master of this valley against the designs of the wicked elements among his people.

When he had said so, he could then sleep in peace. They also believed that the jinn had knowledge of the unseen, or what lies beyond the reach of human perception. They would give information to soothsayers who would then make predictions. Some Arabs worshipped the jinn, alleging that they were related to God. Some suggested that God had a wife from among the jinn and that she gave birth to angels.

Belief in the jinn on lines similar to these is widespread in all *jahiliyyah* societies. Indeed, some legends and superstitions about them continue to be spread in different environments, even in the present day.

While such superstitions used to circulate widely, giving people different ideas and concepts about them, there were also other people who denied their existence altogether. They described any talk about the jinn as superstitious. Therefore, the Quranic message sets the record straight. It confirms their existence and corrects wrong ideas about them, freeing people from the shackles of fear about the jinn and submission to their alleged authority.

The jinn do exist. They describe themselves in this section in the following words: *There are among us, the ones in accord with morality. And there are among us other than that. We had been of ways differing from one another.* (72:11) Some go astray and lead people astray, while others are naive and can easily be deceived: *And yet a foolish one among us had been saying an outrageous lie about God! But we, truly, thought that the humankind, nor the jinn would ever say a lie about God* (72:4-72:5) They are susceptible to divine guidance, able to listen to the Quran, understand it and be affected by it: *Say: It was revealed to me that a group of jinn listened to me. They said: Truly, we heard a wondrous Recitation. It guides to the right judgment, so we believed in it. And we will never ascribe partners with our Lord anyone.* (72:1-72:2)

By their nature, they can be punished, and the results of belief and unbelief can affect them: *So, truly, when we heard the guidance, we believed in it. And whoever believes in his Lord, he will fear neither meagerness nor vileness. And, truly, we are the ones who submit to God. Among us there are the ones who swerve from justice. And whoever submitted to God, then, those sought right mindedness. As for the ones who swerve from justice, they had been as firewood for hell.* (72:13-72:15)

When humans appeal to them, they cannot benefit them; on the contrary, they increase their affliction: *And that there had been men of humankind who would take refuge with the masculine of the jinn, but they increased them in vileness.* (72:6) They have no knowledge of the realm beyond their perception, and they no longer have any contact with heaven: *And we stretched towards the heaven. Then, we found it was filled with stern guards and burning flames. And we had been sitting in positions having the ability to hear. But whoever listens now will find a burning flame and watchers for him. And we were not informed whether the worst was intended for those who are on earth or whether their Lord intended for them right mindedness.* (72: 8-72:10) They have no relation to God Almighty: *Truly, He, exalted be the grandeur of our Lord. He took no companion (f) to Himself, nor a son.* (72:3) They have no power to resist Gods will: *And we, truly, thought that we will never be able to weaken God on the earth and we will never weaken Him by flight.* (72:12)

We learn all this about the jinn from what is mentioned in this section. Some of their other characteristics are mentioned elsewhere in the Quran. For example, there is the reference to those of them who were made subservient to the Prophet Solomon. They did not know of his death until sometime after it occurred, which confirms that they have no knowledge of what is beyond their faculties of perception: *Then when We decreed death for Solomon, nothing pointed out his death to the jinn but a moving creature of the earth which consumed his scepter. So when he fell down, it became clear to the jinn that if they had known the unseen, they would not have lingered in expectation in the despised punishment.* (34:14)

THE JINN'S ACCOUNT

This section contributes significantly to the formulation of the Quranic concept of the truth of the God and servitude to Him, as well as the truth of the universe, the creatures living in it and their interrelations.

There is a definite causal relation between people's following the right way and the operation of some forces in the universe, according to God's will and its effect on His creatures: *If they went straight on the way, We would have satiated them with copious water so that We try them in it. But whoever turns aside from the Remembrance of his Lord, He will dispatch him to a rigorous punishment.* (72:16-72:17) This is a truth that forms part of the Quranic concept of the interrelation between the human being, the universe and God's will.

In the jinn's account we have confirmation of God s Oneness, a

negation of His having a spouse or a son, affirmation of reckoning and requital in the life to come, and the fact that no creature can ever escape God anywhere in the universe. All will receive their fair dues.

The jinn's account asserts that God belongs only to God, and that servitude to Him is the highest status people can attain: *And, truly, when the servant of God stood up, calling to Him, they be about to swarm upon him.* (72:19)

The world beyond our perception belongs totally to God alone, and the jinn know nothing about it: *And we were not informed whether the worst was intended for those who are on earth or whether their Lord intended for them right mindedness.* (72:10)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 72:1-72:19

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quranic message tells Prophet Muhammad to say that it was revealed to him that a group of the jinn listened to his recitation of the Quran.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

Jinn, unseen forces, are part and parcel of the community. We learn from this section that some interaction may take place between different types of creatures even though they may have totally different natures and constitutions. An example of such interaction is what happens between humans and the jinn, as mentioned in this section as elsewhere in the Quran. Even in his abode on earth, we are not isolated from other creation. We may have some interaction with them. The isolation we feel, as a species or a community or an individual, does not apply to the nature of the universe. This idea should broaden mans feelings towards the universe and the creatures, forces and secrets it contains. We may not be aware of these, bur they exist in the world around us. We are not the only dweller in the universe as we sometimes imagine.

QUESTIONS

What was it like to not understand or be able to do it?
How did you come to understand it?
What was that like?
Was it worth it?
Did it seem worth it at the time?
What made you change your mind?
Will the support seem to the reader to justify the conclusion?
Should I change the conclusion, or beef up the support?
What counter-examples or problems would occur to the reader here?
What do I want to say about them?
How am I interpreting my Quranic source?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message tells us about the unseen creatures known as the jinn. How did the jinn become believers in the Quranic message? **Fact:** They listened to Prophet Muhammad reciting the Quran and heard a wondrous recitation. The Quranic message has an inspiring message. The jinn are unseen forces or energies, creatures from a different world than ours. There is an unseen world habited by creatures different from us. Unseen creatures can also be believers. The Quranic message.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I chose one moral trait to strive for in one month.
I focused on how I can develop that positive trait in myself.
I recognized that I was becoming defensive when someone tried to point out a deficiency in my thinking.
I owned up to my own ignorance on the moral trait and began to deal with it.

LESSON 40(2). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT EMPATHETIC ALTRUISM, LOVE

WHAT IS EMPATHETIC ALTRUISM?

There is yet a higher stage of moral achievement described as selfless concern and love for the welfare of others or altruism (*ihsan*) which signifies performance of moral action in conformity with the moral ideal with the added sense of deep loyalty to the cause of God, done in the most graceful way that is motivated by a unique love for God. Performance of God-conscious actions accompanied by a true faith is only a stage in the moral life of a person which, after several stages, gradually matures into altruism (ihsan). Altruism is based on having a deep love for God. Love as a human ideal demands that the human being should love God as the complete embodiment of all moral values above everything else.

Altruism is the belief in or practice of disinterested and selfless concern for the well-being of others. Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another. Empathetic Altruism is to believe in an practice a selfless concern for the well-being of others through sharing the feelings of another.

Empathetic altruism is understanding the need to imaginatively put oneself in the place of others to genuinely understand them. Students must recognize their egocentric tendency to identify truth with their immediate perceptions or longstanding beliefs. Empathetic altruism correlates with the ability to accurately reconstruct the viewpoints and reasoning of others and to reason from premises, assumptions, and ideas other than their own. This trait also requires that they remember occasions when they were wrong, despite an intense conviction that they were right, and consider that they might be similarly deceived in a case at hand.

> The number of followers continues to grow in Makkah among men and women of the tribes of the Quraysh and others as the revelation continues, though the Quraysh were imprisoning and seducing as many of the Muslims as they could. Many of the Quraysh leaders gathered together after sunset outside the Kabah.
>
> They decided to send for Muhammad and to negotiate and argue with him so that they could not be held to blame on his account in the future. When they sent for him, the Messenger came quickly because he thought that what he had said to them had made an impression, for he was most zealous for their welfare, and their wicked way of life pained him. When he came and sat down with them, they explained that they had sent for him in order that they could talk together.

No Arab had ever treated his tribe as Muhammad had treated them, and they repeated the charges which have been mentioned on several occasions. If it was money he wanted, they would make him the richest of them all; if it was honor, he should be their prince; if it was sovereignty, they would make him king; if it was a spirit which had got possession of him (they used to call the familiar spirit of the jinn *raiy*), then they would exhaust their means in finding medicine to cure him. The Messenger replied that he had no such intention. He sought not money, nor honor, nor sovereignty, but God had sent him as an Messenger, and revealed a message to him, and commanded him to become an announcer and a warner. He had brought them the messages of his Lord, and given them good advice. If they took it then they would have a portion in this world and the next. If they rejected it, he could only patiently await the issue until God decided between them, or words to that effect.

They said: Well, Muhammad if you won't accept any of our propositions, you know that no people are more short of land and water, and live a harder life than we, so ask your Lord, who has sent you, to remove for us these mountains which shut us in, and to straighten out our country for us, and to open up in it rivers like those of Syria and Iraq, and to resurrect for us our forefathers, and let there be among those that are resurrected for us Qusayy ibn Kilab, for he was a true shaykh, so that we may ask them whether what you say is true or false. If they say you are speaking the truth, and you do what we have asked you, we will believe in you, and we shall know what your position with God is, and that He has actually sent you as a Messenger as you say.

He replied that he had not been sent to them with such an object. He had conveyed to them God's message, and they could either accept it with advantage, or reject it and await God's judgment. They said that if he would not do that for them, let him do something for himself. Ask God to send an angel with him to confirm what he said and to contradict them; to make him gardens and castles, and treasures of gold and silver to satisfy his obvious wants. He stood in the streets as they did, and he sought a livelihood as they did. If he could do this, they would recognize his merit and position with God, if he were a Messenger as he claimed to be.

He replied that he would not do it, and would not ask for such things, for he was not sent to do so, and he repeated what he had said before.

They said: Did not your Lord know that we would sit with you, and ask you these questions, so that He might come to you and instruct you how to answer us, and tell you what He was going to do

with us, if we did not receive your message? Information has reached us that you are taught by this fellow in al-Yamama, called al-Rahman, and by God we will never believe in the Rahman. Our conscience is clear. By God, we will not leave you and our treatment of you, until either we destroy you or you destroy us.

When they said this, the Messenger got up and left them. Abd Allah ibn Abu Umayya ibn al-Mughayra ibn Abd Allah ibn Umar ibn Makhzum (who was the son of his aunt, Atika bint Abd al-Muttalib) got up with him and said to him: O Muhammad, your people have made you certain propositions, which you have rejected; first they asked you things for themselves that they might know that your position with God is what you say it is so that they might believe in you and follow you, and you did nothing. Then they asked you to take something for yourself, by which they might know your superiority over them and your standing with God, and you would not do it. Then they asked you to hasten some of the punishment with which you were frightening them, and you did not do it, or words to that effect. By God, I will never believe in you until you get a ladder to the sky and mount up it until you come to it, while I am looking on, and until four angels shall come with you, testifying that you are speaking the truth, and by God, even if you did that I do not think I should believe you.

QURANIC CHAPTER 72: THE JINN (AL-JINN)
SIGNS 72:10-72:24

Say: Truly, I call only to my Lord,
and I ascribe not as partners with Him anyone. (72:20)
Say: Truly, I possess not the power to hurt
nor to bring right mindedness for you. (72:21)
Say: Truly, none would grant me protection
from God—not anyone!
And I will never find other than Him
that which is a haven (72:22)
unless I be delivering messages from God,
His messages.
And whoever disobeys God and His Messenger,
then, for him is the fire of hell,
ones who will dwell in it forever, eternally. (72:23)
Until when they saw what they are promised,
then, they will know who is weaker of ones

who help and fewer in number. (72:24)
Say: I am not informed
if what you are promised is near,
or if my Lord will assign for it a space of time. (72:25)
He is The One Who Knows of the unseen!
And He discloses not the unseen to anyone, (72:26)
but a Messenger with whom He was content.
Then, truly, He dispatches in advance of him
and from behind him, watchers (72:27)
that He know that they expressed
the messages of their Lord.
He enclosed whatever is with them
and He counted everything with numbers. (72:28)

COMMENTARY°

Some of the facts clearly stated by the jinn are then repeated in this section two the section that addresses the Prophet: *Say: Truly I call only to my Lord and I ascribe no partners with Him.* (72:20) *Say: Truly never would grant me protection from God anyone and never will I find othe than Him that which was a haven.* (72:22)

The section confirms this truth in its address to the Prophet: *Say: Truly, I possess not the power to hurt nor to bring right mindedness for you.* (72:21)

It is also unknown to Gods messengers, apart from what God, in His infinite wisdom, chooses to inform them of: *Say: I am not informed if what you are promised is near, or if my Lord will assign for it a space of time. He is The One Who Knows of the unseen! And He discloses not the unseen to anyone, but a Messenger with whom He was content. Then, truly, He dispatches in advance of him and from behind him, watchers.* (72:25-72:27)

Consistent with this phenomenon are the images and scenes the section portrays and the inspiring statements it includes, particularly in its last passage after the jinn concluded their discourse. In this last part, the section addresses the Prophet in a way that fills the listener with much sympathy. He is commanded to declare that he looks for nothing in respect of his message other than delivering it, and that he is closely watched by God as he goes about this task: (72:20-72:28)

Whoever disobeys God and His Messenger will have the fire of hell, where they will abide for ever. When they see what they have been promised, they will realize who has the lesser help and is smaller in number. (72:20-72:28)

In addition, the section delivers a special and psychological ef-

fect in its lucid presentation of what the jinn said and the truth included in their account. This truth is of great significance, inviting much reflection and contemplation. It also suits the sad overtone evident in the section's rhythm. It only needs to be read rather slowly to impart the feeling we have just outlined.

The Quran also refers to a quality of Iblis and his folk. Iblis, or Satan, belonged to the jinn, but he is devoted totally to evil, corruption and tempting others to do evil: *O Children of Adam! Let not Satan tempt you as he drove your parents out of the Garden, tearing off their garments from both of them to cause them to see their intimate parts. Truly he and his type sees you whereas you see them not. Truly We have made he and the satans protectors of those who believe not.* (7:27)

This implies that the jinn have a form that humans cannot see, while they can see us. In addition, Chapter 55, The Lord of Grace, states from which substances the jinn and human beings are created: *He created the human being from earth mud like potter's clay. He created the ones who are spirits from a smokeless flame of fire.* (55:14-55:15)

The section corrects what the ungrateful Arab and other people used to say about the jinn, believing that they had exceptional powers and a large role to play in the universe. Others who have denied the existence of these creatures outright, mocking anyone who so believes, do not tell us the basis of their denial. Do they claim that they know every type of creature in the universe and cannot find the jinn among them?

SUMMARY OF QURANIC SIGNS 72:20-72:28

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

Prophet Muhammad is commanded to declare that he looks for nothing in respect of his message other than delivering it, and that he is closely watched by God as he goes about this task.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message shows that Prophet Muhammad has commanded to declare that his purpose is only to deliver the Quran. Who are the watchers? He is protected by the watchers because he has been graced with the revelation. He is protected in all aspects of his life whether he is aware of them or not. God has blessed the Prophet and has sent watchers to protect him. There are watchers who are part of the unseen world. To the community listening to the revelation, they are relieved to know that God is watching over their beloved Prophet. That there are unseen forces in the universe.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I recognized that by defining something, I was giving it meaning.
I realized that once I defined something, the meaning then determined how I feel about it, how I act upon it and the implications it had.
I realized that there is often more than one way to define or give meaning to something.
I was able to turn the negatives into positives.
I was able to turn my mistakes into opportunities to learn.
I was able to make a list of five recurrent negative contexts in which I feel frustrated, angry, unhappy or worried.
I identified the definition/meaning in each case that was causing my negative emotions.
I was able to find a positive definition for each and then plan for my new responses as well as new emotions.

LESSON 41(1). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT FAIRNESS (NOT BEING SELF-SERVING OR EGOCENTRIC)

HOW IS FAIRNESS DEFINED?

Developing a sense of fairness requires the willingness and consciousness of the need to entertain all viewpoints sympathetically and to assess them with the same moral traits, without reference to one's own feelings or vested interests, or the feelings or vested interests of one's friends, community, or nation. It implies adherence to moral traits without reference to one's own advantage or the advantage of one's group.

The fair and just-minded Quranic critical thinkers work to improve their thinking whenever they can. They want things for themselves, but they aren't selfish. They want to help other people. They want to help make the world better for everyone. They are willing to give things up to help others (when it makes sense to). They don't always have the right answers, but they work to improve their thinking (and actions) over time.

Fairness is similar to justice. Justice is a divine attribute and the Quran emphasizes that we should adopt it as a moral ideal. God commands people to be just towards one another: *Say: My Lord commanded me to justice (7:29); truly, God commands justice and kindness and giving to one who is a possessor of kinship and He prohibits depravity and ones who are unlawful and insolent. He admonishes you so that perhaps you will recollect. (16:90); and I was commanded to be just among you* (42:15), and, in judging between person and person, to judge justly: *And when you gave judgment between humanity, give judgment justly* (4:58) for He loves those who judge justly.

All believers stand firmly for justice even if it goes against themselves, their parents, their relatives, without any distinction of rich and poor: *Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God even against yourselves or the ones who are your parents or the nearest of kin, whether you would be rich or poor* (4:135) God's revelation itself is an embodiment of truth and justice: *Completed was the Word of your Lord in sincerity and justice.* (6:115) It is revealed with the Balance (of right and wrong) so that people may stand forth for justice: *We caused the Book to descend with them and the Balance so that humanity may uphold equity.* (57:25)

The value of justice is absolute and morally binding and the believers are, therefore, warned that they should not let the hatred of some people lead them to transgress the limits of justice or make them depart from the ideal of justice, for justice is very near to piety and righteousness: *Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God and let not that you detest a folk drive you into not dealing justly. Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness.* (5:8)

Justice demands that people should be true in word and deed: *They are the ones who remain steadfast and the ones who are sincere and the ones who*

are morally obligated and the ones who spend in the way of God and the ones who ask for forgiveness at the breaking of day (3:17) faithfully observe the contracts which they have made and fulfill all obligations.

When the Messenger's sense of fairness and justice begins to be blazed abroad throughout the land he is mentioned in Madinah. There is no tribe among the Arabs who know more about the Messenger when and before he is mentioned than this tribe of Aws and Khazraj. The reason for this is that they are well acquainted with the sayings of Jewish rabbis and they live side by side with them as allies. When the Messenger is spoken of in Madinah and they hear of the trouble he has had with Quraysh, Abu Qays ibn al-Aslat, brother of Ibn Waqif, composed signs about it.

Abu Qays is warmly attached to Quraysh since he is related to them through his wife, Arnab bint Asad ibn Abd al-Uzza ibn Qusayy, and he with his wife used to stay with them for years at a time. He composes an ode in which he magnifies the sanctity of the area, forbade Quraysh to fight there, urged them to stand by one another, mentioned their merits and virtues, urges them to protect the Messenger, and reminds them of how God has dealt with them and had saved them in the War of the Elephant.

When the Quraysh become distressed by the trouble caused by the enmity between them and the Messenger and those of their people who accept his teaching, they stir up against him, foolish men who call him a liar, insult him, and accuse him of being a poet, a sorcerer, a diviner, and of being possessed. However, the Messenger continues to proclaim what God has ordered him to proclaim, concealing nothing, and exciting their dislike by condemning their religion, forsaking their idols, and leaving them to their unbelief.

QURANIC CHAPTER 36: YASIN
(YA SIN)
SIGNS 36:1-36:12

Makkah: *Ya Sin.* (36:1)
By the Wise Quran, (36:2)
truly, you are among the ones who are sent (36:3)
on a straight path, (36:4)
sent down successively by
The Almighty, The Compassionate (36:5)
that you warn a folk whose fathers were not warned,
so they were ones who were heedless. (36:6)

Certainly, the saying was realized
against most of them for they believe not. (36:7)
We laid yokes on their necks up to the chins,
so that they are ones who are stiff-necked. (36:8)
And We laid in advance of them
an embankment and behind them an embankment.
Then, We covered them so they perceive not. (36:9)
And equal it is to them whether you warn them,
or you warn them not. They will not believe. (36:10)
You have only warned whoever followed the Remembrance
and dreaded The Merciful in the unseen,
so give him good tidings of forgiveness
and a generous compensation. (36:11)
Truly, We give life to the dead
and We write down what they put forward and their effects.
We counted everything in a clear record. (36:12)

COMMENTARY°

Ya Sin. By the Wise Quran. (36:1-36:2) God says an oath by these two letters and by the Quran. This combination endorses the view we have expressed elsewhere about the mention of separate letters at the beginning of many sections, and the relation between mentioning these letters and the Quran. The proof that God is the source of the Quran is obvious from these letters which are available to all Arabs to use yet they are incapable of producing with them anything like the thoughts and modes of expression contained in the Quran. Yet seldom do they consider such confirmation.

This Quran has a soul of its own, giving it qualities similar to those of a living person with whom you have mutual responses and feelings. This takes place when you pay full attention to it and listen to it with your heart and soul. Whenever you open your faculties up to it, the Quran reveals to you more of its secrets. When you have lived for a while in the company of the Quran, you will long for its distinctive features, just as you long for the features of a close friend. God's Messenger used to love to listen to the Quran being recited by other people. He would even stop by people's doors if he overheard someone inside reciting the Quran, just like a lover listens to a conversation about the one he loves.

The Quran is certainly wise. It addresses everyone according to their ability; touching heart strings, speaking in a measured way, and using a wisdom that suits each person. Furthermore, the Quran is full of wisdom. It educates people wisely, according to a straight logical and psychological system that releases all human potential and di-

rects people to what is good and beneficial. It establishes a code of living that allows every human activity within the limits of its wise system.

God Almighty swears by the two letters, Ya Sin, and by the Quran to confirm the truth of revelation and the message delivered by the Prophet: *Truly, you are among the ones who are sent on a straight path,* (36:3-36:4) Limitless in His glory, God does not need to express an oath, but this oath by the Quran and its letters gives the subject of the oath added greatness. God would not swear by anything unless it were great indeed, worthy of being sworn by.

Truly, you are among the ones who are sent. (36:3) The way this sign is phrased imparts a feeling that sending messengers is a well recognized fact, with many past cases. This is not what is being proved here. Instead, what is being emphasized is that Muhammad is one of these messengers. The oath is addressed to Muhammad himself, not to those who deny his message, so as to place the oath, the Messenger and the message above argument or discussion. It is a fact being stated by God about His Messenger.

Truly, you are among the ones who are sent on a straight path. (36:4) This explains the nature of the message after the truth about the Messenger has been stated. By nature, this message is straightforward. It is as straight as the edge of a sword. It admits no crookedness, deviation, or prejudice. The truth it contains is clear, free of ambiguity, and does not bend to serve any interest or to satisfy any desire. Whoever wants this truth will find it pure, simple and accurate.

Sent down successively by The Almighty, The Compassionate. (36:5) We note how God identifies Himself in such situations so that people will understand the true nature of what has been revealed to them. God is the Almighty who does what He pleases, yet He is Merciful to His servants. Whatever He does to them is born out of His mercy.

The purpose of this revelation is to warn people and give them God's message: *You warn a folk whose fathers were not warned, so they were ones who were heedless* .(36:6) To be unaware is the worst form of corruption. Unawareness makes a heart unable to respond or interact. It sees the pointers to the truth yet is unable to respond, unable to feel their presence. Therefore, a warning is the best thing that can be given to such people who remain unaware, having gone for generations without anyone to alert them to the truth.

The section then speaks of the fate of these people, and the judgment that is certain to befall them, considering that God knows all there is in their hearts and minds, and all that they did in the past or

will do in the future: *Certainly, the saying was realized against most of them for they believe not.* (36:7) Judgment has been passed, as God knows that they will not believe. Therefore, this is the fate of the majority of them because they will not see divine guidance for what it is nor will they interact with it.

At this point, the section draws an image of their psychological condition, and we see them with chains around their necks, barriers separating them from divine guidance, and with a cover over their eyes depriving them of the ability to see: *We laid yokes on their necks up to the chins, so that they are ones who are stiff-necked. And We laid in advance of them an embankment and behind them an embankment. Then, We covered them so they perceive not.* (36:8-36:9) Their hands are fastened with chains to their necks, placed under their chins, which has the effect of lifting up their heads such that they cannot see what is in front of them. Moreover, there are walls and barriers both in front of and behind them, which means that even if they were released from these chains, they still could not see through the barriers. Furthermore, the covers placed over their eyes makes it even more impossible for them to see.

And equal it is to them whether you warn them, or you warn them not. They will not believe. (36:10) Their case is settled. God knows that faith will not penetrate their hearts. No warning will ever benefit a heart that has steeled itself against divine guidance, and barracked its approach. Warnings do not create hearts; it only alerts a heart that is alive, ready to receive guidance: *You have only warned whoever followed the Remembrance and dreaded The Merciful in the unseen, so give him good tidings of forgiveness and a generous compensation.* (36:11)

Therefore the Prophet is told to give them *so give him good tidings of forgiveness and a generous compensation.* (36:11) They need the forgiveness of any sin they commit providing they do not persist in doing it, and they deserve the generous reward for fearing God and following what He has revealed. These two aspects go hand in hand: when a person truly fears God, he or she is certain to follow His guidance and implement the system He has laid down. At this point, the truth of resurrection is emphasized, together with the reckoning that ignores nothing: *Truly, We give life to the dead and We write down what they put forward and their effects. We counted everything in a clear record.* (36:12)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 36:1-36:12

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The signs here are directed to Prophet Muhammad confirming that God has sent him as God had sent previous Messengers to warn the people. Only those who follow the Remembrance and dread the Merciful in the unseen heed the warning.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message confirms that it was God who sent Prophet Muhammad. How does the Quranic message confirm that God sent Prophet Muhammad? The Quranic message states that Prophet Muhammad is among the ones who are sent on a straight path to warn people. It is those who follow the Remembrance and fear the Merciful in the unseen to heed the warning. The ones who are sent is another word for messenger and comes from the same root word in Arabic (*r-s-l*). These signs confirm those who follow Prophet Muhammad that he is on a straight path, and they, as well. There are those who are not on the straight path.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I found that sometimes I am not fair-minded.
I was able to contrast the reasoning of a believer and an ungrateful person based on Quranic signs.
I gained insight into fair-mindedness and developing a sense of justice when I considered multiple points of view.

LESSON 41(2). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL QURANIC STANDARD

LOGIC (BEING REASONABLE)

Logic is a word that has many meanings and uses:

1) Correct reasoning or the study of correct reasoning and its foundations.
2) The relationships between propositions (supports, assumes, implies, contradicts, counts against, is relevant to).
3) The system of principles, concepts, and assumptions that are the basis for Quranic Studies.
4) Reasoning that bears upon the truth or justification of any belief or set of beliefs.
5) Reasoning that bears upon an answer to any question or set of questions.

The word logic relates to the question of explanation. As human thought and behavior is to some extent based on logic rather than instinct, we try to figure things out using ideas, meanings, and thought. Such intellectual behavior inevitably involves logic or considerations of a logical sort: some sense of what is relevant and irrelevant, of what supports and what counts against a belief, of what we should and should not assume, of what we should and should not claim, of what we do and do not know, of what is and is not implied, of what does and does not contradict, of what we should or should not do or believe.

Concepts have a logic in that we can investigate the conditions under which they do and do not apply, of what is relevant or irrelevant to them, of what they do or don't imply, etc. Questions have a logic in that we can investigate the conditions under which they can be settled. Quranic Studies has a logic in that the Quran has purposes and a set of logical structures that bear upon those purposes: assumptions, concepts, issues, data, theories, claims, implications, consequences, etc.

The concept of logic also plays an essential role in critical thinking. Unfortunately, it takes a considerable length of time before most people become comfortable with its many uses. In part, this is due to people's failure to study their own thinking in keeping with the standards of reason and logic. This is not to deny, of course, that logic is involved in all human thinking. It is rather to say that the logic we use is often implicit, unexpressed, and sometimes contradictory.

According to the Quran to be logical is to be "reasonable" (*'aqala*), to use one's intellect (*'aql*). This course in Quranic Studies is to learn from Quranic logic. Events described in the Quran do not just happen. The sacred text's description of events make sense when you understand its meaning.

Questions should be asked with a method to them. Teachers should help students figure out the logic behind the sign (*ayah*) or signs (*ayat*). Their an-

swers should always reference particular Quranic signs. How they learn to support their answers by giving reasons and references to the sign(s) is important, not any specific answer that they give.

In many cases, Quranic learning has been through rote memorization and drills based on having memorized the signs. When students learn through this method, they are not logically informed as to what the Quranic signs are saying. They are learning only by association or rote memorization without connecting the revelation to how they think or how they chose to live their life.

As a result, students learn to think of the Quranic text as something they simply memorize without ever understanding the meaning of what it says. In doing so, they do not integrate the meanings of the Quranic message into their lives, they do not "own" it. They rarely relate, that is, make relevant, what they have memorized to their own experience nor are they able to critique each by means of the other. They rarely try to test by making it a part of their everyday life. They rarely ask questions such as:

> Why is this so? How does this relate to what I already know?
> How does this relate to what I am learning in other classes?

With the method of memorization of the sacred text, very few students ever think that they need to implement what they are learning in their life nor have they learned how to do so.

The Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge mixed with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression (*al-tafaqquh fi'l-din*), that is, "understands the religion." This means as a reasonable approach filled with curiosity to constructing a worldview of Islam. Islam, in other words, advises knowledge through analysis and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely rigid and authoritaniam approach that teaches blind certainty and a closed-mindedness that results in an imprisonment of the mind so complete that the prisoner does not even know that his or her mind has been imprisoned. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions: Faith based on detailed analysis (*al-iman al-tafsilli*) as opposed to undigested and uncomprehended faith (*al-iman al-ijmali*). The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the clerics of all the leading schools of thought.

The prevailing reading of the Quran on being reasonable consists of a coalition of faith and reason which is also cognizant of both the inner and outer aspect of reality and the limits, therefore, of human reason.

QURANIC CHAPTER 36: YASIN
(YA SIN)
SIGNS 36:13-36:32

Makkah: Companions of the Town (36:13)
Makkah: Companions of the Town (36:14)
Makkah: Companions of the Town (36:15)
Makkah: Companions of the Town (36:16)
Makkah: Companions of the Town (36:17)
Makkah: Companions of the Town (36:18)
Makkah: Companions of the Town (36:19)
Makkah: Companions of the Town (36:20)
Makkah: Companions of the Town (36:21)
Makkah: Companions of the Town (36:22)
Makkah: Companions of the Town (36:23)
Makkah: Companions of the Town (36:24)
Makkah: Companions of the Town (36:25)
Makkah: Companions of the Town (36:26)
Makkah: Companions of the Town (36:27)
Makkah: Companions of the Town (36:28)
Makkah: Companions of the Town (36:29)
Makkah: *O how regrettable for the servants!*
A Messenger approaches them not,
but they had been ridiculing him. (36:30
Consider they not how many generations
We caused to perish before them who,
truly, return not to them. (36:31)
And, truly, all of them will be altogether,
ones who are charged in Our Presence. (36:32)

COMMENTARY°

The first phrase: *O how regrettable for the servants!* expresses reaction to a sorrowful situation. This situation cannot be changed though sorrow and pain about it can be expressed. God Almighty does not experience such a feeling Himself, but He states that the situation these people are in deserves such reaction by others. Theirs is a depressing condition that leads to great misery: *O how regrettable for the servants!* They are offered a chance to save themselves but they turn away. This even though they see how earlier communities perished, yet they benefit nothing by the lessons they present. God opens wide the doors of His mercy to them, time after time, as He sends them messengers, but they ignore His mercy and behave with insolence and ill manners: *Consider they not how many generations*

We caused to perish before them who, truly, return not to them? And, truly, all of them will be altogether, ones who are charged in Our Presence. (36:31-36:32)

While those who had already gone will not return to their successors, they will not be ignored or left without reckoning. They will all face that at the proper time: *And, truly, all of them will be altogether, ones who are charged in Our Presence.* (36:32)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

O how regrettable for the servants! A Messenger approaches them not, but they had been ridiculing him. Consider they not how many generations We caused to perish before them who, truly, return not to them. And, truly, all of them will be altogether, ones who are charged in Our Presence.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to relate the content of the above signs to practical situations in my life.

I knew that I had connected the Quranic message when I was able to tell someone in my own words what this sign says.

LESSON 41(3). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL QURANIC STANDARD
DEFINITIVENESS (TO BE PRECISE)

When the Quraysh became distressed by the trouble caused by the enmity between them. and the Messenger and those of their people who accepted his teaching, they stirred up against him foolish men who called him a liar, insulted him, and accused him of being a poet, a sorcerer, a diviner, and of being possessed. However, the Messenger continued to proclaim what God had ordered him to proclaim, concealing nothing, and exciting their dislike by contemning their religion, forsaking their idols, and leaving them to their unbelief.

Yahya ibn Urwa b. al-Zubayr on the authority of his father from Abd Allah ibn Amr b. al-Aas told me that the latter was asked what was the worst way in which Quraysh showed their enmity to the apostle. He replied: I had been with them one day when the notables had gathered in the *hijr* and the Messenger's name had been mentioned. They said that they had never known anything like the trouble they had endured from this fellow. He had declared their mode of life foolish, insulted their forefathers, reviled their religion, divided the community, and cursed their gods. What they had borne was past all bearing, or words to that effect.[14]

While they had been thus discussing him, the Messenger came towards them and kissed the Black Stone. Then he passed them as he walked round the House. As he passed they said some injurious things about him. This I could see from his expression. He went on and as he passed them the second time they attacked him similarly. This I could see from his expression. Then he passed the third time, and they did the same.

He stopped and said: Will you listen to me O Quraysh? By him who holds my life in His hand, I bring you slaughter.

This word so struck the people that not one of them but stood silent and still. Even one who had hitherto been most violent spoke to him in the kindest way possible, saying: Depart, O Abu al-Qasim, for by God you are not violent.

So the Messenger went away, and on the morrow they assembled in the *hijr*, I being there too. They asked one another if they remembered what had taken place between them and the Messenger so that when he openly said something unpleasant, they let him alone. While they were talking thus the Messenger appeared, and they leaped upon him as one man and encircled him, saying: Are you the one who said so-and-so against our gods and our religion?

The Messenger said: Yes, I am the one who said that.

And I had seen one of them seize his robe. Then Abu Bakr interposed himself weeping and saying: Would you kill a man for saying God is my Lord?

Then they left him. That is the worst that I ever saw Quraysh do to him.

QURANIC CHAPTER 36: YASIN
(YA SIN)
SIGNS 36:33-36:50

Makkah: *And a sign for them*
is the dead body of the earth.
We gave life to it and We brought out grain from it
so that they eat from it. (36:33)
We made in them gardens of date palm trees and grapevines
and We caused a spring to gush forth in it (36:34)
so that they may eat of the fruit from there
that are not what their hands did.
Will they, then, not give thanks? (36:35)
Glory be to Him Who created pairs, all of them,
of what the earth causes to develop
as well as of themselves
and of what they know not! (36:36)
And a sign for them is the nighttime.
We pluck the daytime from it
and that is when they are ones in darkness! (36:37)
And the sun runs to a resting place for it.
That is foreordained by The Almighty, The Knowing. (36:38)
And for the moon We ordained mansions
until it reverted like an ripe aged, dry, date stalk. (36:39)
It is not fit and proper for the sun
to overtake the moon nor the nighttime
one to take the lead over the daytime.
They each swim in an orbit. (36:40)
A sign for them is that We carried their offspring
in a laden boat. (36:41)
And We created for them of its like that they ride. (36:42)
And if We will, We drown them with none for them
to whom they cry aloud for help nor will they be saved (36:43)
unless it be a mercy from Us
and as an enjoyment for awhile.(36:44)

Madinah (36:45)
Makkah: *There never approaches them any sign from the signs of their Lord, but they had been ones who turn aside from it.*(36:46)
And when it was said to them: Spend of whatever God provided you, those who were ungrateful said to those who believed: Will we feed him whom He would have fed, if He wills? You are nothing, but in a clear going astray.(36:47)
And they say: When is this promise if you had been ones who are sincere? (36:48)
They expect but one Cry which will take them while they strive against one another.(36:49)
Then, they will not be able to leave a legacy nor will they return to their people.(36:50)

COMMENTARY°

ONLY LOOK AROUND

Life is a miracle which no person can produce. It is God's hand that produces miracles, initiating life in what has been dead. The sight of growing plants, flowering gardens and ripening fruit should open people's eyes and hearts to appreciate the wonderful work engendered by God's hand. It splits the earth to allow the shoot to appear, longing for freedom and light, gives vigor to the stem which is eager to enjoy sunlight, loads the branches with leaves and fruit, opens up flowers and gets the fruit ready for picking: *So that they may eat of the fruit from there that are not what their hands did. Will they, then, not give thanks?* (36:35)

Having given them this gentle and inspiring touch, the section then turns away from them a little to glorify God who gave them the flourishing gardens, making all plants in pairs, male and female, like men and women and countless other species known only to God: *Glory be to Him Who created pairs, all of them, of what the earth causes to develop as well as of themselves and of what they know not!* (36:36)
(36:37-36:40)

And the sun runs to a resting place for it. (36:38) God Almighty, who knows its movement and destination, says that it moves along its course to a particular destination which is known only to Him. He alone knows when and what this is. When we remember that the sun is much larger than the earth, we live on and imagine this great mass running its set course in space, unsupported, we appreciate what power controls and conducts the affairs of the universe and the sort

of might and knowledge that power commands: *That is foreordained by The Almighty, The Knowing.* (36:38)

And for the moon We ordained mansions until it reverted like an ripe aged, dry, date stalk. (36:39) People see the moon in these phases, as it is born a thin crescent then grows every day until it takes its shape as a full moon before it begins to decrease until it looks like an old date stalk. If you observe the moon night after night, you will appreciate this remarkable way of expression, particularly the use of the words: *Until it reverted like an ripe aged, dry, date stalk.* Therefore, the inspiring Quranic description.

The section then makes it clear that the system regulating all these great celestial bodies is most accurate, and that this controls its resulting phenomena: *It is not fit and proper for the sun to overtake the moon nor the nighttime one to take the lead over the daytime.* (36:40) Indeed every planet and star has its own orbit which it follows accurately.

They each swim in an orbit. (36:40) The movement of all these great bodies in space is similar to the movement of ships and boats in the sea. Huge as these bodies are, they are no more than little spots floating on the surface of the sea.

A sign for them is that We carried their offspring in a laden boat. And We created for them of its like that they ride. And if We will, We drown them with none for them to whom they cry aloud for help nor will they be saved unless it be a mercy from Us and as an enjoyment for awhile. (36:41-36:44)

WHAT OPENS SEALED HEARTS

Clear and inspiring as these signs are, people continue to pay little heed. Their hearts remain closed and they persist in ridicule and denial, hastening the end against which God's messengers have warned them:

When they are told: *There never approaches them any sign from the signs of their Lord, but they had been ones who turn aside from it. And when it was said to them: Spend of whatever God provided you, those who were ungrateful said to those who believed: Will we feed him whom He would have fed, if He wills? You are nothing, but in a clear going astray. And they say: When is this promise if you had been ones who are sincere?* (36:46-36:48)

If they are urged to be charitable and to give to the poor a portion of what God has provided for them, they say in ridicule: *And when it was said to them: Spend of whatever God provided you, those who were ungrateful said to those who believed: Will we feed him whom He would have fed, if He wills? You are nothing, but in a clear going*

astray. (36:47)

Finally the section mentions their expressed doubts about God's promise and their ridicule of the warnings given them: *And they say: When is this promise if you had been ones who are sincere?* (36:48) God's promise is not brought forward or delayed because of people's pleas. With God everything has its definite measure; everything takes place at its appointed time and place, in accordance with His infinite wisdom. It is He who conducts the universe and all that happens in it according to a perfect system. The answer to this rude question is given in the form of a scene from the Day of Judgment, showing them what happens then, but not its timing.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 36:33-36:50

WHO IS GOD?

Everything around us in the universe speaks to us about God, giving evidence of His presence. We only need to look at the land in front of us and how we see it dead, lifeless, lacking a drop of water. Then we see it quicken, producing grain and adorned with gardens replete with dates and grapes. Springs of water gush through it; and in no time, it is full of life.

When the night comes, light disappears and darkness spreads: this is something we see every day in every corner of the world, except for polar areas. Despite its daily occurrence, it is a remarkable sign that deserves contemplation. The Quranic description here is unique as it shows the day intertwined with the night and then God strips the day off the night to let darkness spread.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

Although all these signs are enough to cause an open heart to shudder and bring it in line with the universe, the ungrateful will not see them for what they are, and even if they do see them, they still do not reflect on them. Because His grace is endless, God does not leave them to themselves. He sends them messengers to warn them and to call them to their Lord, the Creator of the universe. The messengers' role is to alert people's hearts so that they can see why they should be God-conscious, and to warn them against incurring God's displeasure, pointing out its causes and teaching them how to avoid it. Signs are constantly given them in their lives, time after time, in addition to the signs that are available in the universe around them, but they choose to remain blind.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a purpose within a point of view based

on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message describes the ungrateful and their fate. What do the ungrateful say? When they are told to spent to feed the needy, they ask why they should feed those whom God feeds. They ask: When is the promise of the Day of Judgment? Expecting but one Cry which will take them, they do not realize that they will not leave a legacy then nor will they return to their people.The ungrateful deny the signs telling them to feed the poor and to be aware of the Hour. The ungrateful are ungrateful because they deny the signs that God explains so clearly here. Those who deny the signs will be taken with one Cry which will come when they are in dispute with one another. Those who are ungrateful will not be able to leave a legacy nor return to their people.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I realized that the Quranic message contains some signs that are definitive.
I looked for inter-connections between these various Quranic signs.
I realized the inter-connectness of ideas in these signs.
I did not memorize the signs and repeat them like a parrot does, but I studied them as a detective would, relating new things
I learned to things that I previously knew.

LESSON 41(4). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL QURANIC STANDARD

CONNECTING COMPLEXITIES AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS

To connect complexities and interrelationships is an intellectual standard for critical thinking. This relates to the complexities and interrelationships between and among the Quranic verses. They require you to think beneath the surface of what the section or sign is saying. Exploring the Quranic message in the classroom depends on the quality of commitment of you and your classmates to develop your ability to discern the depth of what you are studying.

The revelation was having a positive effect on many of the people of Makkah except for the most hard core of the enemies of the Messenger urge their slaves and children to insult the Messenger. One day they even kill a camel and one of them orders his servant to throw the camel's intestines across the Messenger's shoulders while he is praying at the Kabah.

The Messenger does not react to these insults, being in control of his passions. He informs other than to inform Abu Talib about what is taking place. Abu Talib, his sword unsheathed, goes with his servant toward the enemies of the Messenger when they had gathered together. He says: I swear by God that I will kill whoever among you moves. Then he orders his servant to throw the intestines on them.

QURANIC CHAPTER 36: YASIN
(YA SIN)
SIGNS 36:51-36:67

Makkah: *And the trumpet would be blown!*
That is when they will be sliding down
to their Lord from their tombs. (36:51)
They would say: Woe on us!
Who raised us up from our place of sleep?
This is what The Merciful promised
and the ones who are sent were sincere. (36:52)
It would be but one Cry.
That is when they will be in Our Presence altogether,
ones who are charged. (36:53)
This Day no soul will be wronged at all
nor will you be given recompense
but for what you had been doing. (36:54)
Truly, the Companions of the Garden that Day
are ones who are joyful in their engagements. (36:55)

They and their spouses, in shade on raised benches,
ones who are reclining. (36:56)
They will have in it sweet fruits
and they will have whatever they call for: (36:57)
Peace! A saying from the Compassionate Lord. (36:58)
And be separated on this Day, O ones who sin! (36:59)
Make I not a compact with you, O Children of Adam,
that you not worship Satan?
Truly, he is a clear enemy (36:60)
and that you should worship Me.
This is a straight path. (36:61)
And, certainly, He caused to go astray
many an array of you.
Be you not, then, reasonable? (36:62)
This is hell which you had been promised. (36:63)
Roast in it this Day because you had been ungrateful. (36:64)
On this Day We will seal over their mouths
and their hands will speak to Us and their feet will bear witness
to what they had been earning. (36:65)
And if We will, We would, certainly, have obliterated their eyes.
Then, they would race towards the path.
How would they have perceived? (36:66)
And if We will, We would, certainly,
have transformed their ability.
Then, they would not have been able to pass on,
nor would they return. (36:67)

COMMENTARY°

All they are waiting for is a single blast that will overtake them while they are still disputing. No time will they have to make bequests, nor will they return to their own people. The Trumpet will be sounded, and out of their graves they will rise and hasten to their Lord. *They would say: Woe on us! Who raised us up from our place of sleep? This is what The Merciful promised and the ones who are sent were sincere.* (36:52)

Those who are destined for paradise are today happily occupied. Together with their spouses, they will be in shady groves seated on soft couches. There they have fruit and whatever they ask for: Peace and fulfilment through the word of the Lord of mercy. *Truly, the Companions of the Garden that Day are ones who are joyful in their engagements. They and their spouses, in shade on raised benches, ones who are reclining. They will have in it sweet fruits and they will have whatever they call for: Peace! A saying from the Compassionate*

Lord .(36:55-36:58)

By contrast the section dwells on the scene of reckoning faced by the others. It is shown with all that it involves of reproach and blame:

And be separated on this Day, O ones who sin! Make I not a compact with you, O Children of Adam, that you not worship Satan? Truly, he is a clear enemy and that you should worship Me. This is a straight path. And, certainly, He caused to go astray many an array of you. Be you not, then, reasonable? This is hell which you had been promised. Roast in it this Day because you had been ungrateful. (36:59-36:64)

However, the scene does not end here. It moves on to provide a most singular image: *On this Day We will seal over their mouths and their hands will speak to Us and their feet will bear witness to what they had been earning.* (36:65) Thus, they let each other down; their own bodies give witness against them; their personalities are torn apart with each part claiming that the other is lying. Each organ in their bodies returns to their Lord separately, in full submission to Him. This is a terrible scene, one that we can hardly contemplate.

The section gives us here two examples of such hardships, making it clear that God could impose the same on anyone: *And if We will, We would, certainly, have obliterated their eyes. Then, they would race towards the path. How would they have perceived? And if We will, We would, certainly, have transformed their ability. Then, they would not have been able to pass on, nor would they return.* (36:66-36:67)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 36:51-36:67

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The signs tell of the end of the ungrateful and that of the Companions of the Garden.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?

2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message is to frighten the ungrateful with the truth of how their end will be. The Quranic message asks the ungrateful: Will you not be reasonable? The trumpet will be blown. No soul will be wronged at all. Ones who sin will be separated on that Day from the Companions of the Garden. The ones who sin had worshiped Satan who had caused them to go astray. The ungrateful are being unreasonable in denying the Quranic signs. To be reasonable. The ungrateful are not reasonable because they deny the signs of the Hour even though they are clearly explained in the Quranic message. There will be a Day of Judgment.

STUDENT ACTIVITY

MIND MAPPING YOUR OPINION

Write down the most important word or short phrase or symbol from these signs in the center of a page.
Think about it; circle it.
Post other important concepts and their words outside the circle. Edit this first phase.
Think about the relation of outside items to the center item.
Erase, edit, and/or shorten words to key ideas.
Relocate important items closer to each other for better organization.
If possible, use color to organize information.
Link concepts with words to clarify their relationships.
Continue working outward.
Freely and quickly add other key words and ideas (you can always erase!).
Think weird: combine concepts to expand your map or; break boundaries.
Develop in directions the topic takes you—not limited by how you are doing the map.
As you expand your map, tend to become more specific or detailed. Set the map aside.
Later, continue development and revision.
Stop and think about relationships you are developing
Expand the map over time (right up to an exam if necessary!).
This map is your personal learning document.
It combines what you knew with what you are learning and what you may need to complete your "picture."
Add descriptive links for the arrows.

LESSON 41(5). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL QURANIC STANDARD

APPROPRIATENESS (TO MAKE RELEVANT)

Appropriate means bearing upon or relating to the matter at hand, that is understanding the Quranic message. It implies a close logical relationship with, and importance to, what the Quran is revealing. Its relevance and validity of information helps in structuring problems and solving them. The appropriateness of the Quran's message has been clear for over 1400 years as it is the model which the believers follow.

It is not the effort that you put into this Quranic Studies that is evaluated, but the quality of your learning. Quranic appropriateness connects to its teaching you how to think. Once you have assessed the issues, concepts and information relevant to the particular sign or signs, your thinking will be focused on the task, question or problem related from the sign or signs.

The Quranic message conforms to the principles of good reasoning. It is sensible and teaches good judgment through its consistent, logical, complete, relevant and appropriate arguments on issues that are important to human life. Being sensitive with an ability to judge appropriateness is only developed with continuous practice, practice in distinguishing the relevant from the irrelevant, by evaluating what is appropriate and by arguing for and against the appropriateness of facts unlike al-Nadr ibn al-Harith.

> One day al-Nadr ibn al-Harith stood up and said: O Quraysh, a situation has arisen which you cannot deal with. Muhammad is a young man most liked among you, most truthful in speech, and most trustworthy, until, when you saw grey hairs on his temple, and he brought you his message, you said he was a sorcerer, but he is not, for we have seen such people and their spitting and their knots. You said, a diviner, but we have seen such people and their behavior, and we have heard their rhymes. You said a poet, but he is not a poet, for we have heard all kinds of poetry. You said he was possessed, but he is not, for we have seen the possessed. He shows no signs of their gasping and whispering and delirium. You men of Quraysh, look to your affairs, for by God, a serious thing has befallen you.
>
> Now al-Nadr ibn al-Harith was one of the satans of the Quraysh. He used to insult the Messenger and show him enmity. He had learned the tales of the kings of Persia, the tales of Rustam and Isfandiyar. When the Messenger had held a meeting in which he reminded them of God, and warned his people of what had happened to bygone generations as a result of God's vengeance, al-Nadr got up when the Messenger sat down, and said: I can tell a better story than he, come to me. Then he began to tell them about the kings of Persia,

Rustam and Isfandiyar, and then he would say: In what respect is Muhammad a better story-teller than I? he asks arrogantly.

QURANIC CHAPTER 36: YASIN
(YA SIN)
SIGNS 36:68-36:83

Makkah: *And he to whom We give a long life,*
We bend him over in his constitution.
Will they not, then, be reasonable? (36:68)
We taught him not poetry, nor is it fit and proper for him.
It is but a Remembrance and a clear Recitation (36:69)
to warn whoever had been living and that the saying be realized
against the ones who are ungrateful. (36:70)
Consider they not how We created for them
—out of what Our hands did—
flocks, so they were of them ones who are owners? (36:71)
And We subdued them for them so that of them,
some are riding animals and some of them, they eat. (36:72)
And they have profits from them
and providing a place from which to drink.
Will they not, then, give thanks? (36:73)
And they took to themselves gods other than God
so that perhaps they will be helped. (36:74)
They are not able to help them
while they are to them as a charged army. (36:75)
So let not their saying dishearten you.
Truly, We know what they keep secret
and what they speak openly. (36:76)
Consider not the human being
that We created him from seminal fluid?
That is when he is a clear adversary. (36:77)
He propounded parables for Us and forgot his own creation.
He said: Who will give life to these bones
when they decayed? (36:78)
Say: He will give life to them
Who caused them to grow the first time
and He is The Knowing of every creation. (36:79)
It is He Who made for you fire out of a green tree.
That is when you kindle from it. (36:80)
Is not He Who created the heavens and the earth
One Who Has Power to create the like of them?

Yea! And He is The Knowing Creator. (36:81)
Truly, His command when He wanted a thing
is but to say to it: Be! Then, it is! (36:82)
Then, Glory be to Him in whose hand
is the Kingdom of everything!
And to Him you will be returned. (36:83)

COMMENTARY°

Then, Glory be to Him in whose hand is the Kingdom of everything! And to Him you will be returned. (36:83) His hand, strong and innovative, has created cattle and subjected them to us, and created us from a mere gamete. The same hand can also give life to bones that had broken into dust, just like it originated them in the first instance. It was this hand that produced fire from the green tree and brought the heavens and the earth into being. In the end, it has control of everything in the universe.

We taught him not poetry, nor is it fit and proper for him. It is but a Remembrance and a clear Recitation. (36:69) Both descriptions apply to the same thing: the role of revelation is to be a reminder as it works on the mind keeping it alert, and the Quran is to be recited. It has been revealed to perform a particular task: *To warn whoever had been living and that the saying be realized against the ones who are ungrateful.* (36:70) Here the Quranic expression contrasts unbelief with life, making unbelief equal to death and propensity to faith equal to life.

JUST ONE GOD

The second section of this final part of the section addresses the question of God's oneness providing a framework for it from what people see around them and the blessings God grants them: (36:71-36:76)

These signs begin with the question, *Consider they not?* The sign to which their attentions are drawn here is present before them. They do not have to look far for it. It is before their very eyes, requiring little contemplation. It is the flocks God has created and made subject to their control. Thus, they are able to ride them, use them for food, milk and draw various other benefits from them. Therefore, the question: *Will they not, then, give thanks?*

Yet people do not give thanks. Some of them would even attribute divinity to beings other than God. *And they took to themselves gods other than God so that perhaps they will be helped. They are not able to help them while they are to them as a charged army.* (36:74-36:75) In the past, such deities were statues, stones, trees,

stars, angels or jinn. Such idolatry persists today in some areas of the world. Yet people today who do not worship such deities do not necessarily believe in God's Oneness. They may associate partners with Him, in the form of believing in some alleged powers other than His, or relying on other things. What we need to understand here is that polytheism can take different forms at different times and places.

The ungrateful used to worship these deities seeking their help to win victory, yet it was they who protected those deities against assault from others: (36:75) This was absurdity of the lowest order. However, in essence, most people have not gone far above this level of absurdity; only in form.

So let not their saying dishearten you. Truly, We know what they keep secret and what they speak openly. (36:76) This is an address to the Prophet as he confronted those worshipping deities other than God. He should not be concerned about them. God knows all about them and what they scheme. They represent no danger to any believer who places his trust in God.

The third section of this final passage raises the question of resurrection and reckoning. He asks: (36:77-36:82)

This section looks first at a person's own position, describing his origins and ends, putting it all before him so that he looks at it as a reality taking place all the time. Yet a person neither appreciates its significance nor takes it as evidence confirming the realization of God's promise to resurrect all humanity. *Consider not the human being that We created him from seminal fluid? That is when he is a clear adversary.* (36:77) The human being does not doubt that his immediate origin is a gamete. It is no more than a tiny drop of worthless fluid; a drop containing countless thousands of cells, one of which then becomes an embryo, which later grows into a contentious person, arguing with his Lord and demanding proof and evidence from Him.

It is the creative power of God that transforms that gamete into this quarrelsome, contentious person. What a gulf between origin and end! Yet we find it difficult to believe that this power can bring us back to life after death. *He propounded parables for Us and forgot his own creation. He said: Who will give life to these bones when they decayed? Say: He will give life to them Who caused them to grow the first time and He is The Knowing of every creation.* (36:78-36:79) How simple, using the logic of nature and obvious reality!

The section then further examines the question of the human being's initial creation and his subsequent resurrection: *Is not He Who created the heavens and the earth One Who Has Power to create the like of them? Yea! And He is The Knowing Creator.* (36:81)

The truth is that God creates this and that, as well as other types of creation, effortlessly. It is all the same to Him whether the creature He wants to bring into life is large or small: *Truly, His command when He wanted a thing is but to say to it: Be! Then, it is!* (36:82) This 'something' could be a galaxy, an earth, an ant or a mosquito. It is all the same, requiring no more than a simple word, 'Be', and it is there. Nothing is easier or more difficult, near or far. Once God's will intends something, it exists whatever it may be. However, God tells us of this fact in a way we understand. This is why He expresses it in this way: saying, 'Be', to His intended creation.

At this point, the section gives its final beat, describing the relation between the universe and its Creator: *Then, Glory be to Him in whose hand is the Kingdom of everything! And to Him you will be returned.* (36:83) The term 'mighty dominion' describes this relation in its majestic reality of absolute ownership and complete authority over everything in the universe. Then to Him all will return.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 36:68-36:83

WHO IS GOD?

In this final part, the section reviews all the issues it tackled earlier: The nature of revelation; God and its Oneness, and resurrection. These are reviewed in separate sections and shown with strong effects coupled with a clear rhythm. The overall aim is to show how God's hand controls everything in the universe.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

Prophethood means constant contact with God, learning directly from what He reveals and an untiring attempt to mold human life in a way that pleases Him. Thus, the Quran has been revealed to the Prophet Muhammad so as to warn those who are alive and can benefit from the warning.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The ungrateful, on the other hand, are dead and cannot hear the warning. Therefore, the function of the Quran, in as far as they are concerned, is to record their situation which makes them deserve punishment. God will not inflict punishment on anyone who has not received His message. Punishment is for those who did receive His message and who were determined to disbelieve in it, thereby writing their own ruin.

When we look at the matter in this Quranic light we are bound to feel that God's blessings overflow from every corner around us. Thus, every time we ride an animal, eat a piece of meat, have a drink of milk, taste a piece of cheese or use fat for cooking, or wear a garment made of hide, wool or animal hair,

we in our hearts feel God's endless blessings and infinite grace. This, then, applies to all things around us and everything we use, whether animate or inanimate. All our lives, then, become a continuous act of glorifying God and giving thanks to Him.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message states that when God wanted a thing, He says to it: "Be" and it is. The Quranic message in these verses asks several questions: Will the ungrateful not be reasonable? Consider they not how God is the Creator? Will they not give thanks? Is not He Who created the heavens and the earth One Who Has Power to create the like of them again? The ungrateful are not reasonable. They deny the blessings of God's creation. Everything is created one by one by God saying to it: "Be" and it is. The word "*kun*")"Be" is an important word in the Quranic context because it is the sound used by God to create. This is God's Command whenever He wills a thing including all human beings. God says: Glory be to Him in whose hand is the Kingdom of everything! God is the Creator of everything.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I understood how to relate what I was saying to the question at hand.
I did not have a problem sticking to the issue of relevance.

LESSON 42(1). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL QURANIC STANDARD
WORTHINESS, FOCUSING ON THE IMPORTANT

The ungrateful Quraysh did not focus on the message. Instead, their claims against God are even more singular and more impudent. Could there he anything worse than that a human being should claim that God has partners when it is God who has created him as well as everything else in the universe? The Prophet was asked: Which is the most cardinal sin? His reply was: That you should claim that God has equals, when it is He who has created you.[15]

QURANIC SIGNS REVEALED: THE CRITERION (AL-FURQAN)
SIGNS 25:1-25:9

Makkah: *Blessed be He*
Who sent down the Criterion
between right and wrong to His servant
so that he be a warner to the worlds, (25:1)
He to Whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth,
and Who takes not to Himself a son.
There be no ascribed associate with Him in the dominion.
And He created everything
and ordained it a foreordaining. (25:2)
Yet they took gods to themselves
other than Him who create nothing
and are themselves created.
And they neither possess for themselves
hurt nor profit nor have they dominion over death,
nor this life, nor rising up. (25:3)
And those who were ungrateful said:
This is nothing but a calumny he devised
and other folk assisted him.
So, surely, they brought about injustice and untruth. (25:4)
And they said: Fables of the ancient ones
that he caused to be written down!
And they are to be related from memory to him
at early morning dawn and eventide. (25:5)
Say: It was caused to descend
by He who knows the secret in the heavens and the earth.
Truly, He had been Forgiving, Compassionate. (25:6)

And they said: What Messenger is this that he eats food
and walks in the markets?
Why was an angel not caused to descend
to him to be a warner with him? (25:7)
Or why is not a treasure cast down to him
or why is there not a garden for him
so that he may eat from it?
And the ones who are unjust said:
You follow nothing
but a bewitched man. (25:8)
Look on how they propounded for you parables
for they went astray
and are not able to find a way. (25:9)

COMMENTARY°

This section defines God's purpose of the revelation of the Quran to His servant, *the Criterion between right and wrong to His servant so that he be a warner to the worlds.* (25:1) As a Makkan revelation, this Quranic statement is important as it proves the universal character of the Quranic message right from its early days. It defines its universal nature when the Prophet is still in Makkah, facing determined and unrelenting opposition. It sought to achieve all this through the Quran, the criterion God revealed to His Messenger to serve as a warning to all the worlds.

The One who revealed to His Messenger this standard is: *He to Whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth, and Who takes not to Himself a son. There be no ascribed associate with Him in the dominion. And He created everything and ordained it a foreordaining.* (25:2)

Once more God is not mentioned here by name, but a relative pronoun is used instead to emphasize certain suitable attributes of His: *He to Whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth.* He has absolute dominion over the heavens and the earth: a dominion that signifies ownership, control and ability to change and transform.

And Who takes not to Himself a son. Procreation is one of the natural laws God has set in operation to ensure the continuity of life, but God is Eternal and able to accomplish His purpose, whatever that may be.

There be no ascribed associate with Him in the dominion. Everything in the heavens and the earth testifies to the unity of design, nature, law and control.

And He created everything and ordained it a foreordaining. He determines the size, shape, function, time and place of everything as

well as all their interactions and harmonization.

The nature of the universe, its make up and constitution fill us with wonder. It makes nonsense of any suggestion that the universe came into being by chance. It demonstrates the meticulous and detailed proportioning of creation, which human knowledge can hardly manage to fathom even in one area of the vast universe. With every scientific progress made, more aspects of the harmony and balance in the universe and its natural laws are discovered. Consequently, we can better appreciate the meaning of this wonderful statement: *And He created everything and ordained it a foreordaining.*

The ungrateful at the time of the Prophet did not understand any of this. Therefore, they persisted with their ingratitude. *Yet they took gods to themselves other than Him who create nothing and are themselves created. And they neither possess for themselves hurt nor profit nor have they dominion over death, nor this life, nor rising up.* (25:3)

Their false deities are deprived of the most essential characteristics of God. Thus, they "*who create nothing*," while God has created everything, and false deities "*and are themselves created.*"

Having shown how they fabricate such allegations against God, who is limitless in His glory, the section refers to their impudent claims against God's Messenger, replying to them in a way that shows how false and absurd it all is. (25:4-25:6)

The ungrateful were stubborn, motivated by fear for their social status that relied on religious position. Therefore, they resorted to such tactics, making false allegations that could be accepted by ordinary people who might not have similar literary talent. They claimed that the Quran was *nothing but a calumny he devised and other folk assisted him.* (25:4) It is said that those other people were three foreign slaves, or even more. This is such an absurd allegation. If a person could, with the help of others, devise this Quran, or invent it, what would stop them from producing, with the help to refute Muhammad's argument? He repeatedly challenged them to do so and they failed to take up the challenge.

Therefore, why the section does not employ any argument to refute their absurd allegations. Instead, it gives its clear judgment on their statements: *So, surely, they brought about injustice and untruth.* (25:4) It is an act of injustice against the truth, Muhammad and themselves. Moreover, it is a blatant falsehood.

The section gives other examples of their false accusations against the Prophet and the Quran: *And they said: Fables of the ancient ones that he caused to be written down! And they are to be related from memory to him at early morning dawn and eventide.* (25:5) The Quran gives accounts of the history of past communities

for the dual purpose of serving as lessons and admonition for people, and providing guidance for them. The ungrateful, however, label such true accounts of history as 'fables of ancient times', alleging that the Prophet sought such fables to be written down so that they could be read out to him, because he was unlettered, unable to read.

Their allegation that these accounts were fables of ancient communities indicates that they were accounts of events that took place much earlier. This means that Muhammad could not have known them without being taught by some of those who circulated such fables, generation after generation. Therefore, the section replies that the One who revealed them to Muhammad was the One whose knowledge is absolute. It is He who knows all secrets everywhere in the universe. Indeed, no situation, past present or future, is unknown to Him: *Say: It was caused to descend by He who knows the secret in the heavens and the earth.*knows the secrets of the heavens and the earth." (25:6) How could the knowledge of legend reciters be compared with God's perfect knowledge? How could legends and fables be compared to the secrets of the heavens and the earth, which are perfectly known to God? This is no more than comparing a drop of water to an endless ocean.

The section then examines their false accusations against the Prophet, their absurd objections to his being human, and their unreasonable suggestions about his message: (25:7-25:9)

HONORING HUMANITY

From this angle, the whole idea seems unlikely. However, taken from another angle, it seems perfectly natural. God has breathed of His own spirit in us, and with this breath we have become distinguished among all God's creation, and placed in charge of the earth. Yet our human knowledge, experience, and abilities remain limited and inadequate. God would not leave us without support and guidance to show us the way to fulfil the trust. Therefore, He gave us the potential to be in contact with Him through the breath of the divine spirit that distinguishes us. It is no wonder that God should choose a human being who has the spiritual potential to receive His message and so impart to us what guides us and humanity along the right way.

This is an aspect of the grace God bestows on the us, which appears amazing in one way and perfectly natural in another. But those who do not know the value of this creature and the true nature of the honor God has bestowed on us deny that we should be in contact with God through divine revelation. They refuse to acknowledge that such a person should be chosen by God as His Messenger. They think that angels are better placed to carry out such a role: *And they said:*

What Messenger is this that he eats food and walks in the markets? Why was an angel not caused to descend to him to be a warner with him? (25:7) But God had ordered the angels to prostrate themselves before the human being as He granted us superior qualities associated with the breathing of His spirit in us.

Another absurd objection focused on God's Messenger walking about the market-place earning his living. His position as Messenger would have been recognized had he been granted great wealth to save him the trouble of so working for his living: *Or why is not a treasure cast down to him or why is there not a garden for him so that he may eat from it? And the ones who are unjust said: You follow nothing but a bewitched man.* (25:8)

The section then refers to another false accusation the ungrateful repeated time after time against the Prophet. The Quran gives the reply to this accusation. *Or why is not a treasure cast down to him or why is there not a garden for him so that he may eat from it? And the ones who are unjust said: You follow nothing but a bewitched man.* (25:8) *Look on how they propounded for you parables for they went astray and are not able to find a way.* (25:8-25:9)

They liken him to bewitched people at one time, accuse him of false fabrication at another, and even compare him at times to those who relate legends. All this is far beyond the truth. They have missed every road that leads to the truth and are left in error: *Look on how they propounded for you parables for they went astray and are not able to find a way.* (25:9)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 25:1-25:9

WHO IS GOD?

This opening gives a clear indication of the main themes of the section, namely the revelation of the Quran by God, the addressing of its message to all humanity, God's absolute Oneness that admits no partner or offspring, and His sovereignty over the whole universe which He, in His wisdom, controls. The Quran is named here as the Criterion, which is also the title of the section. The name indicates distinction and separation between the truth and falsehood, divine guidance and erroneous beliefs.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

This section, a Makkan revelation, appears to aim at comforting the Prophet and giving him solace, reassurance and support as he faced the stubborn rejection, maltreatment, haughty argument and open hostility of the Quraysh idolaters. In one aspect, it shows the divine kindness bestowed by God on His Messenger, dispelling his pain, comforting his heart so that it over-

flowed with reassurance and showing him an abundance of care and compassion. In another aspect, it portrays the fierce battle against arrogant mortals who stubbornly oppose God's Messenger, combining falsehood with arrogance, and hostility with a wilful rebuttal of divine guidance.

Yet despite all this, the ungrateful continue to associate partners with God and the fabricators persevere in their falsehood. Moreover, baseless arguments and arrogant statements are made.

The elders among the ungrateful instructed them to circulate lies when they were fully aware that the Quran which Muhammad recited could not have been authored by a human being. They actually knew this given their appreciation of the Arabic language. Furthermore, they could not stop themselves from being influenced by the Quran. Moreover, they knew Muhammad long before his prophethood, and they were aware that he was exemplary in his honesty: He never told a lie, broke a promise, or breached a trust. How could he, then, invent a lie against God, attributing to Him words which He did not say?

We see how God's infinite wisdom, which ordains all things in due proportion, has determined that His Messenger should be a human being so that he fulfils the role of leading humanity along the way He has laid down for them. To object to this choice is to betray ignorance of such wisdom and the honor God has granted humanity.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question**(s)?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept**(s)?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption**(s)?
7. What is (are) the **Implication**(s)?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message indicates that the Quran is the stable Criterion of

true and false or right and wrong, with a standard of moral valuation binding upon the individual and society. Does Criterion (*furqan*) apply to human reason that enables us to distinguish between the true and the false? The Quranic message continuously distinguishes between the followers of Prophet Muhammad and the ungrateful who deny the Quranic message. We need to use our reason and critical thinking to distinguish between what is right and what is wrong. The word Criterion (furqan) is used seven times in the Quran in reference to distinguishing or discerning the difference between right and wrong. Using reasoning and determining the criterion when we want to act is an important part of the Quranic message. That as human beings we have been given the ability to distinguish between right and wrong.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I am frequently able to explain this to someone.
I know that if I cannot explain this sign to someone else, it shows that I have not learned them well enough.

LESSON 42(2). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL QURANIC STANDARD

NUMEROUS OR MULTIPLE VIEWPOINTS

In terms of critical thinking, numerous as an intellectual standard means involving multiple viewpoints: In the Quranic context, there are the many viewpoints presented: those of the ones who are believers, the ones who are ungrateful, the ones who are doers of good, the ones who are wrongdoers, and so forth.

The Quran presents multiple viewpoints and indicates a wide-ranging and broad-minded perspective. Its reasoning is clear, accurate precise, relevant and deep along with a breadth of multiple points of view. Thinking in terms of multiple viewpoints requires insightful thinking.

As we think of the early days of the revelation, we can see it from the view of those who were tortured because of their belief. Among those tortured are the aged Yasir and his wife, Sumayah, their son, Ammar ibn Yasir, Bilal, Khabbab ibn al-Aratt, Suhayb al-Rumi and tens of poor and abased people who had no tribal support.

The torture of his Companions is the greatest difficulty that the Messenger has to bear. Those followers who have a protector among the Quraysh tribe are insulted, but not tortured. However, those Companions who have no family name or who are slaves become the immediate victims of the leading idolater, idol-worshippers. The only crime of these early Muslims in Makkah is their belief in God and their loyalty to His Messenger. For this, they become the victims of torture.

THE FIRST MARTYR

This courageous black woman, Sumayah, so enrages Abu Jahl by her silence, in spite of all of the painful torture inflicted upon her, that, while beating her, mad with rage, he abuses her with filthy language, then he takes his spear and stabs and kills her.

Sumayah's husband, Yasir, and son are made to watch her be killed. Abu Jahl then orders Yasir, her husband, to be killed as Ammar is made to watch. Sumayah becomes the first martyr for the Quranic message.

She dies from the knife stab that Abu Jahl had inflicted upon her in order to try to get her to renounce her faith and belief that God is One. Abu Jahl is among the most persistent persecutors of the followers of Muhammad. If the followers come from a powerful tribe that would defend them, Abu Jahl would insult them, mock them, and promise to ruin their reputation. If the converts were merchants,

he would threaten to stop their trade by organizing economic sanctions against them. If the converts were weak and unprotected by a clan, as were Sumayah, her husband, Yasir, and their son, Ammar, Abu Jahl would torture them and even instigated his powerful allies in many other clans to do the same thing with their weak and unprotected.

Sumayah knows that the Messenger of God is the last Messenger. He and all those who had preceded him had come to teach the world wisdom, the Book, and justice. Prophet Muhammad had come to bring unity to races, to groups, to families, and to social classes in order to destroy the discord that had arisen among them by the concerted efforts of those who worship other than the One God and in order to supplant this with the world view of monotheism (*tawhid*). The slogan of unity that Sumayah knew and in which she believed with all her heart to the point that she was willing to die for this principle is a liberating slogan. It is because of this freedom and liberation from all that divides humankind and a movement towards all that unites, that a special sensitivity to monotheism developed among the slaves, the whipped, the hungry, and the oppressed of history, the morale of whom was weakened by people like Abu Jahl who only thought about his own economic interests and of preserving the status quo.

This was why the group of early converts that Sumayah had joined, those who had gathered around the Messenger of God in Makkah are, for the most part, among the most deprived, the most forgotten of the scorned. This is why Sumayah hears the enemies of the Quranic message refer to her 'kind' as 'too poor to make a difference'.

Sumayah senses something else. She senses that this was the greatest praise that could be given to the Quranic message. It changes values of self-interest into values for humankind as a whole. She sees the Messenger of God as a savior for the slaves who are certain that their only fate is slavery. Slaves or the scorned and despised, for they are one and the same, hear the language of coercion of Abu Jahl, that only he and his interests should be served. They are treated in a way to believe that they are only born to experience suffering, to bear hardship, and the heavy loads that others above them are unwilling to carry and—to go hungry.

Sumayah knows the Messenger of God has begun a different kind of movement, a movement in opposition to deception, falsehood, polytheism, discord, a sense of superiority, and class differences. He announces that all of humanity is of one race, from one

source, and had one God. He declares equality for all and follows this.

He destroys all values that had taken the form of idols and shatters all values of ignorance and the aristocratic way of thinking, much as his ancestor, Abraham, had done. He commands his followers to take the scissors to the long, splendid robes some of them wore. He orders them to chop off their long beards that was a sign of aristocracy in the early years. He orders people not to walk in arrogance down the streets and narrow passage ways. He instructs people to ride two at a time upon a horse. And, in order to break down aristocratic values, he sometimes even rides bareback upon a donkey.

Sumayah senses, as she bears the torture of being chained in place to die from the heat of the hot Makkan sun, that the Messenger of God is bringing the same message that Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and other Prophets had brought. Their message, however, had been forgotten and buried with the passage of time. What they had all said was: Say: God is One. She feels that he had stood up to save her and all those who were rightly guided from powerful, aristocrats like Abu Jahl. The Messenger of God explains that just as there is One God, so there is one way, one religion, one spirit, one class—the believers— and but one slogan: There is no deity but God and Muhammad is the Messenger of God. Sumayah dies under the torture of Abu Jahl with these words upon her lips. This first martyr for the Quranic message—and a woman at that—through her martyrdom kept the Quranic movement alive.

AMMAR

Ammar converts in the House of Arqam at the same time as Suhayb ibn Ammar's father is Yasir, a stranger from Yemen. His mother is Sumayah and his brother, Abd Allah, are also believers.

Yasir belongs to a tribe in Yemen of the Madhij or Qahlan stock. He with two brothers had visited Makkah to seek out their maternal relatives. Instead of returning to Yemen, he remains behind with his patron, Abu Hudhayfah, who gives him in marriage to his slave girl Sumayah. She gives birth to Ammar.[17]

The Makhzum clan used to take out Ammar ibn Yasir with his father and mother, who are Muslims, in the heat of the day and expose them to the heat of Makkah. The Messenger would pass by them and say: Patience, O family of Yasir! Your meeting-place will be paradise.

Once the Messenger happened to pass by Ammar and saw that he was crying. He asked him what had happened.

Ammar said: Evil, O Messenger. They would not let me go until

I had abused you and spoken well of their gods.

The Messenger asked: How did you find your heart?

Ammar said: Secure and steadfast in the faith.

The Messenger replied: Then, if they repeat their cruelty, repeat you also your words.[18]

Quranic Signs Revealed: The Criterion (al-Furqan) Signs 25:10-25:20

Makkah: *Blessed be He Who, had He willed,*
assigned for you better than that,
Gardens beneath which rivers run
and He will assign for you palaces. (25:10)
Nay! They denied the Hour.
And We made ready a blaze
for whoever denied the Hour. (25:11)
When it saw them from a far place,
they heard it raging furiously and roaring. (25:12)
And when they were cast down into it, a troubling place,
ones who are chained,
they called for damnation. (25:13)
It will be said to them
Call not today for a single damnation,
but call for many damnations! (25:14)
Say: Is that better or the Garden of Infinity
that was promised the ones who are God-conscious?
It had been a recompense for them and a Homecoming. (25:15)
For them in it will be whatever they will,
ones who will dwell in it forever.
That had been from your Lord a promise,
one that is besought. (25:16)
And on the Day He will assemble them
and what they worship other than God.
To them He will say: Was it you who caused these
My servants to go astray?
Or went they astray from the way? (25:17)
They would say: Glory be to You!
It had not been fit and proper for us
to take to ourselves any protectors other than You.
But You gave them enjoyment and their fathers
until they forgot the Remembrance

and had been a lost folk. (25:18)
So, surely, they denied you in what you say.
Then, you will neither be able to turn away from it,
nor help. And whoever does wrong among you,
We will cause him to experience the great punishment. (25:19)
And We sent not before you any ones who are sent but that,
truly, they eat food and walk in the markets.
And We made some of you as a test for some others.
Will you endure patiently,
and your Lord had been Seeing. (25:20)

COMMENTARY°

Blessed be He Who, had He willed, assigned for you better than that, Gardens beneath which rivers run and He will assign for you palaces. (25:10) But God has willed to give His Messenger what is much better and more valuable than gardens and palaces. He has given him a direct relation with the One who gives all such luxuries, bestowing on him His care and guidance. He enjoys this relationship which is far superior to any worldly comfort or luxury, great as it may be.

We see the ungrateful here as they stand on the Day of Judgment when hardened hearts are shaken to their core. They are made to see what awaits them there in comparison with the happiness that is prepared for the believers: (25:11-25:16)

On the day He gathers them with all those they worship instead of God, He will ask: (25:17-25:19)

The enjoyment that people are allowed for a long time, inheriting it generation after generation, without acknowledgement of the One who gives such blessings or expression of thanks and gratitude to Him, has been their main preoccupation. They forgot to turn to the One who gives us everything we have, and thus their hearts became devoid of all goodness, barren, like a land without fruit, vegetation or life. It is people such as them who are able to torture people because they believe in One God. The Quran tells the torturers: You cannot do anything for yourselves, neither avoiding your well deserved punishment, nor gaining support from anyone or any quarter.

All this is shown as a scene of the Day of Judgment which is held before our eyes. Suddenly, the address is made to those ungrateful in their present condition here on earth: *And whoever does wrong among you, We will cause him to experience the great punishment.* (25:19) Such is the Quranic method of addressing people's hearts at

the moment when they are ready to respond, influenced as they may be by the fearful scene already portrayed.

ENTRUSTING GOD'S MESSAGE TO A HUMAN BEING

Thus they are shown to have witnessed the end of all false fabrication concerning faith and ridicule of God's Messenger. Now the section addresses the Prophet consoling and reassuring him, telling him that his was not a special case among God's messengers. They all shared the same essential attributes:

And We sent not before you any ones who are sent but that, truly, they eat food and walk in the markets. And We made some of you as a test for some others. Will you endure patiently, and your Lord had been Seeing. (25:20)

If the ungrateful voice objections, these are not made against the Prophet in person; rather, they are objections to a law God has put in place for a definite purpose: *And We made some of you as a test for some others.* Thus, those who do not appreciate God's wisdom and plans will object, while those who have full trust in His wisdom and support will persevere and remain reassured. The divine message will continue the struggle using human means and methods, so that those who have faith will demonstrate their patience in adversity: Are you able to endure with patience?

And your Lord had been Seeing. He sees human nature, and what is in people's inner thoughts. He sees to what end each one is driving. We note here the use of the possessive pronoun, 'your Lord', to give the Prophet a feeling of comfort and reassurance. God knows what best affects people's hearts and feelings.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 25:10-25:20

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

Prophet Muhammad is among God's Messengers who all shared the qualities with him.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

At this point in its discussion of their wrongful statements about God and His Messenger, the section reveals another dimension of their disbelief. They deny the Last Hour. Therefore, they have no qualms about making baseless accusations or fabrications. They do not fear that they will face God who will hold them to account for their lies' and fabrications.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message shows that the Garden of Infinity promised to the ones who are God-conscious is better than the blaze for those who deny. Is the blaze and many damnations better or the Garden of Infinity that was promised the ones who are God-conscious? When the ungrateful drawn near the blaze they will hear it raging furiously and roaring. They will be cast into it chained, damned. Using our ability to reason, clearly one would prefer the Garden over the blaze. In the Garden of Infinity will be all that one wants, an eternal place of dwelling. Our actions determine whether we will be in the Garden of Infinity or in the blaze. That God's promise is true.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I considered class time as a time in which I practiced thinking (within the subject) using the fundamental concepts and principles of the course.

I did not sit back passively, waiting for knowledge to fall into my head.

LESSON 42(3). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL QURANIC STANDARD

RIGHT JUDGMENT

Right judgment and truth are related to understanding the purpose or goal. The ungrateful in Makkah lacked a sense of right judgment as they continued to torture the believers.

Bilal had seen the Messenger of God wandering the streets of Makkah looking for crowds of people to whom to tell his message? He sees the Prophet standing before the people and, without thinking about what they may say, tries to help them fear God, gave them tidings of the Day of Judgment, warn them of the dangers of not heeding, show them the way to salvation for he had a Message. His Message is from the One Who befriends the honorable and the One Who is an enemy of the arrogant (*mustakbir*) for it had been revealed to him: *O you wrapped up in a cloak! Arise and deliver your warning.* (74:1-74:2)

The Messenger had been told to warn those who are asleep, who slumber in the tranquillity of their ignorance and the security of their tyranny and arrogance as those who rebel against God's commands (*taghut*). These were people who shepherd the wolf within while grazing the people/sheep without any humiliation. The One God whose message had been given to Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and His last Messenger, Muhammad, is the One God Who commands the angels to bow down before His creation of humankind. And now, in the Makkah of Arabia in the early seventh century, the Children of Adam are being required by the idolaters to bow down before the feet of those who follow satan—the carvers, and guardians of whom were the supporters of classes and clans.

Bilal, the slave of Ethiopian descent, does not fit into their picture, into their class, and as he had no protecting clan, he is among those most severely tortured. The Quraysh show special enmity towards this group of the slaves and the deprived. They imprison them, beat them, deny them food or drink, and expose them to the heat of the sun in order to get them to renounce their faith. Umayya ibn Khalaf devises unheard of tortures towards breaking Bilal's resistance. He dresses him in a suit of armor and makes him lie in the hot midday sun until the metal scorches his skin. When this fails, he puts heavy stones, hot from the heat of the sun, on his chest. Bilal is then asked if he believes in the idols, Lat and Uzza. Bilal, under the strain of the heat and the heavy stone burning through his skin, repeats over and over again: *One, One* (*Ahad, Ahad*). The Quraysh are amazed

by his ability to resist the merciless brutality. Even Umayya is beginning to think that he would have to use a new tactic because this one was not working.

Bilal, a thin and foreign slave of Umayya ibn Khalaf, is taken outside the city everyday by his master to the place where Muslims are tortured. Ibn Khalaf dunks Bilal's head in water and holds it under it until his body stops moving and then he pulls his head up so he can catch a breath and once again holds it under water. He continues to repeat this until Bilal faints and Ibn Khalaf can no longer continue to torture him. He wants Bilal to insult the Messenger. Bilal remains unperturbed by the torture. The moment his head is out of the water, with his first breath, he cries out: Ahad! Ahad, One God! One God! It is as if this is the only word he knows.

Then Ibn Khalaf strips Bilal of his clothes, makes him lie down on stones heated by the noon day sun of the desert, and has a huge stone placed on his frail, bony chest. The slave-master then tries to make Bilal express disgust at Muhammad. Bilal remains silent to whatever he says. Whenever Bilal is able to gather a breath, once again, with great difficulty, he makes his tongue repeat the only word which seems to hold his very life and being within itself. This so angers Ibn Khalaf in his state of ignorance of Reality and infidelity to the One God, that he becomes enraged—this obstinate Ethiopian slave will not obey his orders. Ibn Khalaf has the boulder removed from Bilal's chest. He orders his other slaves to tie a rope to Bilal's feet. He gives the rope to city ruffians and bullies who then pull Bilal along the ground.

When the Quraysh showed their enmity to all those who followed the Messenger; every clan which contained Muslims attacked them, imprisoning them, and beating them, allowing them no food or drink, and exposing them to the burning heat of Makkah, so as to seduce them from their religion. Some gave way under pressure of persecution, and others resisted them, being protected by God.

Bilal, who was afterwards freed by Abu Bakr but at that time belonged to one of Jumah clan, being slave born, was a faithful Muslim, pure of heart. His father's name was Ribah and his mother was Hamama.

Umayya ibn Khalaf ibn Wahb ibn Hudhayfa ibn Jumah used to bring him out at the hottest part of the day and throw him on his back in the open valley and have a great rock put on his chest; then he would say to him: You will stay here till you die or deny Muhammad and worship Al-Lat and al-Uzza.

He would say while he was enduring this: One, One!

Hisham ibn Urwa told me on the authority of his father: Waraqa

ibn Nawfal was passing him while he was being thus tortured and saying: One, One, and he said: One, One, by God, Bilal.

Then he went to Umayya and those of Jumah clan who had thus maltreated him, and said: I swear by God that if you kill him in this way I will make his tomb a shrine.

One day Abu Bakr passed by while they were thus ill-treating him for his house was among this clan. He said to Umayya: Have you no fear of God that you treat this poor fellow like this? How long is it to go on?

He replied: You are the one who corrupted him, so save him from his plight that you see.

I will do so, said Abu Bakr. I have got a black slave, tougher and stronger than he, who is a heathen. I will exchange him for Bilal.

The transaction was carried out, and Abu Bakr took him and freed him.

ABU BAKR , RIGHT JUDGMENT AND THE FREEING OF SLAVES

Before he migrated to Madinah, Abu Bakr freed six slaves, Bilal being the seventh, namely: Amir ibn Fukayha, and Umm Ubays and Zannira. Zannira lost her sight when he freed her and Quraysh said: Al-Lat and al-Uzza are the ones that have taken away her sight; but she said: By the house of God, you lie. Al-Lat and al-Uzza can neither harm nor heal, so God restored her sight.

And he freed al-Nahdiya and her daughter who belonged to a woman of Abd al-Dar tribe. He passed by them when their mistress had sent them about some flour of hers, and she was saying: By God, I will never free you.

Abu Bakr said: Free yourself from your oath.

She said: It is free; you corrupted them so you free them.

They agreed upon the price, and he said: I will take them and they are free. Return her flour to her.

They said: Oughtn't we to finish the grinding and then take it back to her?

He said: Yes, if you like.

He passed by a slave girl of the Muammil, a clan of the Adiyy ibn Kab clan, who was a Muslim. Umar ibn al-Khattab was punishing her to make her give up her belief. At that time he was a idolater. He beat her until he was tired and said: I have only stopped beating you because I am tired.

She said: May God treat you in the same way.

Abu Bakr bought her and freed her.

Muhammad ibn Abd Allah ibn Abu Atiq from Amir ibn Abd Allah ibn al-Zubayr from one of his family told me: Abu Quhafa said

to his son Abu Bakr: My son, I see that you are freeing weak slaves. If you want to do what you are doing, why don't you free powerful men who could defend you and protect you?

He said: I am only trying to do what I am attempting for God's sake.

QURANIC SIGNS REVEALED: THE CRITERION (AL-FURQAN)
SIGNS 25:21-25:34

Makkah: *Those who hope not*
for a meeting with Us said:
Why were angels not caused to descend to us
and why see we not our Lord?
Surely, they grew arrogant among themselves,
defiant, turning in great disdain. (25:21)
On a Day they will see the angels
there will be no good tidings for the ones who sin.
And they will say: Unapproachable! Banned! (25:22)
We will advance on whatever actions they did.
We will make them as scattered dust. (25:23)
The Companions of the Garden on that Day
will have the best resting place
and the fairer place of noonday rest. (25:24)
On a Day when heaven will be split open
with the cloud shadows and the angels were sent down,
a sending down successively, (25:25)
on that Day the true dominion will belong to The Merciful.
And it will be a Day difficult
for the ones who are ungrateful. (25:26)
And on a Day when one who is unjust will bite his hands,
he will say: Would that I took myself
to a way with the Messenger! (25:27)
Ah! Woe is me! Would that I take not to myself
so-and-so as a friend! (25:28)
Certainly, he caused me to go astray
from the Remembrance after it drew near me.
And Satan had been a betrayer of the human being. (25:29)
And the Messenger said: O my Lord!
Truly, my folk took this, the Quran to themselves,
as that which is to be abandoned! (25:30)
And, thus, We assigned for every Prophet
an enemy of the ones who sin.

And your Lord sufficed as one who guides
and as a helper. (25:31)
And those who were ungrateful said:
Why was the Quran not sent down to him all at once?
Thus, We will make firm your mind by it.
And We chanted a chanting. (25:32)
And they bring you no parable.
We brought about The Truth to you
and fairer exposition. (25:33)
Those who will be assembled
on their faces in hell,
those are worse placed,
ones who go astray from the way. (25:34)

COMMENTARY°

OMINOUS PROSPECTS FOR THE UNGRATEFUL

The ungrateful do not hope to meet God. This means that they do not expect such a meeting and do not take it into account so as to determine their prior behavior. In their hearts they do not feel any awe of God. Therefore, they are ready to make utterances that no one who expects to meet God would entertain. *Those who hope not for a meeting with Us said: Why were angels not caused to descend to us and why see we not our Lord? Surely, they grew arrogant among themselves, defiant, turning in great disdain.* (25:21)

They considered it unreasonable that God's Messenger should be a man. They demanded that angels be sent to them testifying to the truth of the message in order for them to believe in it. An alternative demand they made was that they should see God, so as to believe in Him. Such an overbearing attitude betrays the sort of ignorance associated with denying God and His attributes, having no proper esteem for Him. Who are they to make such overbearing demands? What are they in comparison with God Almighty? In God's dominion, they are no more than a particle floating aimlessly in the air, unless they establish a bond between them and God through believing in Him, deriving their strength from Him. Therefore, the reply given them in the same sign shows the source of their overbearing attitude: (25:21)

A truly sarcastic reply is given to the ungrateful as they are informed of the terrible eventuality awaiting them when they see the angels, which is the less overbearing of their demands. For they will only see the angels on a very hard and difficult day on which they will be destined to receive unbearable and inescapable suffering. That is the Day of Reckoning when evil deeds are punished. *On a Day*

they will see the angels there will be no good tidings for the ones who sin. And they will say: Unapproachable! Banned! (25:22)

This is the day when their suggestion is granted: *On a Day they will see the angels.* No good news is given to the sinners on that day, for their punishment awaits them. How terrible is the fulfilment of their request! This is when they say, a forbidding ban!' This phrase used to be said by the Arabs to avert evil and enemies. It is a sort of appeal which hopes to drive enemies away and avoid any harm that might ensue. They utter it on that day by force of habit, because the whole thing comes as a surprise. But what will their words avail them of on that day?

We will advance on whatever actions they did. We will make them as scattered dust. (25:23) It all happens in a brief moment. Our imagination follows the motion described in detail, with actions being raised and thrown up in the air.

The actions of the ungrateful are thus made to die, and their death is shown in a highly tangible image: (25:23)

On the other side we find the believers, who dwell in heaven, in a perfectly contrasting image: *The Companions of the Garden on that Day will have the best resting place and the fairer place of noonday rest.* (25:24) They are well settled, enjoying their comfort. This feeling of settlement contrasts with the scattered dust in the opposite image, and the reassurance felt by the believers contrasts with the fear of the ungrateful that obliges them to make a worried prayer.

The ungrateful also used to suggest that God and the angels should appear before them on the tops of clouds. Such suggestions perhaps show the influence of Jewish legends speaking of God revealing Himself over a cloud or a column of fire. Therefore, the Quran shows another image of the day when their request to see angels is granted: *On a Day when heaven will be split open with the cloud shadows and the angels were sent down, a sending down successively, on that Day the true dominion will belong to The Merciful. And it will be a Day difficult for the ones who are ungrateful.* (25: 25-25:26)

WHAT USE IS REGRET?

In this section God threatens the ungrateful with the sky being rent asunder by clouds. This may be a reference to clouds formed out of the vapors produced by the great explosions. On that day, the angels will go to the ungrateful as the latter suggested, but their task will not be to confirm the Prophet's message, but rather to administer punishment to the ungrateful as God will have ordered: *And it will be a Day difficult for the ones who are ungrateful.* (25:26) So why

do they want the angels to go to them when their arrival signals so much distress?

Everything around the wrongdoing ungrateful is still, while he sends out expressions of regret, with sorrow marking his voice. The rhythm here is deliberately long to add to the sound effects. As we read or hear these signs, we also seem to participate in the expression of regret. *And on a Day when one who is unjust will bite his hands.* (25:27) One hand is not enough. He bites both, alternating from one to the other, because his sorrow and regret are so keen. The movement itself is very common, expressing what the person making it feels. Therefore, it is shown in full clarity.

The wrongdoer will also say: *He will say: Would that I took myself to a way with the Messenger* (25:27) Would that I followed his way and had not moved a single step away from it! He says this about God's Messenger despite the fact that he had denied the very possibility that God might have entrusted him with a message.

Ah! Woe is me! Would that I take not to myself so-and-so as a friend! (25:28) No name is mentioned here, but the friend is described as 'so and so' to include every bad friend who encouraged him to turn away from the path of God's Messenger and follow the wrong way. *Certainly, he caused me to go astray from the Remembrance after it drew near me.* (25:29) He was indeed Satan's aide, or was himself just another Satan. *And Satan had been a betrayer of the human being* leading him into situations of error and letting him down when he most needs help.

We see how the Quran shakes their hearts, painting these fearful scenes of their fate as though this is already happening before their eyes. Yet still they deny God and speak of Him in a way that shows no respect. Indeed they make careless suggestions when what awaits them is certain to fill them with regret.

A COMPLAINT BY GOD'S MESSENGER

After these scenes of the Day of Judgment, the section brings us back to this world with a discussion of the ungratefuls' attitude towards the Prophet and their objections to the method of revealing the Quran from on high. This part of the section again ends with a scene of what happens to the ungrateful on the Day of Judgment.

They have abandoned the Quran, which God revealed to His Messenger to warn and explain to them what lies ahead for humanity. They refused to listen to it because they feared they would be attracted to its message. Stubbornly, they refused to consider its message which would have guided them to the truth and given them light. Although God revealed it as a constitution for human life, guiding it

to all that is best, they shut their minds to it. *And the Messenger said: O my Lord! Truly, my folk took this, the Quran to themselves, as that which is to be abandoned!* (25:30) His Lord certainly knew this, but God's Messenger made his complaint, humbly stating that he had exerted his best efforts, but still his people adamantly refused to listen to the Quran and consider its message.

God comforts His Messenger, telling him that the same was the case with all earlier messengers. *And, thus, We assigned for every Prophet an enemy of the ones who sin. And your Lord sufficed as one who guides and as a helper.* (25:31)

God has willed that every Prophet has to face enemies. Such wicked people stand in the face of the divine message, which is the message of truth. Its advocates then resist its enemies and bear whatever sacrifices they are called on to give. The end is predetermined, and those who place their trust in God are certain of it. It is the provision of divine guidance that leads to the ultimate victory: *And your Lord sufficed as one who guides and as a helper.* (25:31)

THE TIME SPAN OF QURANIC REVELATIONS

The Quran was revealed in small parts, explaining things first to the Prophet and strengthening his resolve to fulfil his task. Its revelation progressed, one passage or section after another, as suited the different stages along the road the Muslim community traveled: *And those who were ungrateful said: Why was the Quran not sent down to him all at once? Thus, We will make firm your mind by it. And We chanted a chanting.* (25:32) The Arabic term *tartil*, translated here as '*chanting*', indicates successive steps according to God's knowledge of what suited the Muslims at the time and their readiness to receive more.

The section continues to reassure the Prophet that he will be given the ultimate argument and the final evidence whenever the ungrateful come up with a new suggestion or objection. *And they bring you no parable. We brought about The Truth to you and fairer exposition.* (25:33) The Quran gives the best explanation and response.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 25:21-25:34

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The ungrateful ask why the Quran was not sent down all at once to him. The Quranic message assures Prophet Muhammad that God will firm his mind by it. It adds that the ungrateful bring no parable to him while the Quranic message reveals the Truth to him.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The ungrateful have given themselves airs and graces, become conceited, proud and haughty. All of which has led them to great transgression. Their pride is their main preoccupation, which means that they no longer give proper estimation to other things and values. They think themselves too great, or masters of the universe who deserve that God should appear before them in person so that they can believe in Him.

The purpose of revealing the Quran is to re-educate a community and establish a new social order. Such a task requires time. In a process of proper education it is not enough to understand the words being said, rather one must interact with them as also with the ideas expressed. This interaction should then be brought into the practical world. Human nature does not go through a total transformation overnight, as a result of reading a book which provides a complete new way of life. It is more likely to be influenced day by day, and by one aspect after another. This gives human nature the chance to gradually, but thoroughly understand it, and to get used to it bit by bit, bearing the responsibilities it requires. Thus, people are not scared off as they might be were it presented in full, surrounded by difficulties. This gradual approach is like serving a fresh nourishing meal every day, from which the recipient becomes stronger and better able to benefit by the next meal, enjoying it even more.

The Quran provides a comprehensive way of life, as well as a system of education that suits human nature. For it is revealed by God, the Creator of human nature who knows it thoroughly. For this reason, it was revealed in parts, to suit the real needs of the Muslim community as it came into existence and began to grow. It is not meant to be a theoretical book which is read for enjoyment or increasing one's knowledge. It is meant to be implemented i full, with every task accomplished and every detailed order carried out. Indee its signs are 'orders of the day' which Muslims receive and start to implement immediately, just like military personnel receive their daily orders on the battlefield. They must understand these orders properly, interact with, and implement them.

This method accomplished miracles in transforming the community which so received it, interacting with it day after day and absorbing its message part after part. When the Muslims ignored this method, viewing the Quran as a book for theoretical knowledge and recitation in worship only, they no longer benefited by it. They simply abandoned its method which aimed to reshape their way of thinking and their everyday lives.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts**

(vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message comforts Prophet Muhammad when faced with the allegations, suggestions and objections made by the ungrateful. How do these Quranic signs comfort the Prophet? The signs list the punishment that is awaiting the arrogant. The warning is given loud and clear to those who deny the signs. The Day will be difficult for the ungrateful while the Companions of the Garden will have the best resting place. The end for those who hope not for a meeting with God will regret their denial on the Day. That Day will come.

USING PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING TO ANSWER QUESTIONS

Problem based learning will provide you with opportunities to:

Examine and try out what you know
Discover what you need to learn
Develop your people skills for achieving higher performance in teams
Improve your communications skills
State and defend positions with evidence and sound argument
Become more flexible in processing information and meeting obligations
Practice skills that you will need after your education

LESSON 42(4). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL QURANIC STANDARDS

CLARITY, UNDERSTANDABLE

The word "clarity" or 'to be clear (*bayan*)" occurs over two hundred times in the Quran. The Quranic message describes itself as having clarity or being clear, having clear signs, making things clear. The clarity in the Quranic message is to guide us to the distinction between truth and error.

Clarity means to be understandable such that the meaning can be grasped; to be free from confusion or ambiguity, to remove obscurities.

Clarity is essential as an opening or beginning or gateway standard because if a statement is unclear, it cannot determined if it is accurate or relevant. In fact, nothing can be determined about it because students may not as yet know what it means. They can only assume that we understand a thought when we can elaborate on it, illustrate it and give an example of it, as the example of the continuation of torture of the early believers by the ungrateful Quraysh.

> Khabbab al-Aratt, an Arab who had been sold into slavery as a result of a raid against his clan of the Tamim tribe, is among the early companions of God's Messenger. He suffers great torture at the hands of his owner, Umm Anmar. A blacksmith by trade, Khabbab had seen the Messenger of God being insulted, conspired against, threatened, and ridiculed in an attempt by the aristocratic Quraysh to try to silence him, make him 'not speak,' and yet he spoke.
>
> Khabbab is among those who suffered torture in order to preserve their faith in God. His master, Umm Anmar, taught him to be a blacksmith in order to make use of his talents. Before the call to prophethood, Muhammad used to sit in front of Khabbab's workshop as he had grown very fond of him. Khabbab then converts once the invitation is given to him by Muhammad. When Umm Anmar hears of his conversion, she takes a hot iron and brands him on his head. Khabbab complains of her actions to the Messenger. The Messenger prays for him, saying: O Lord, help Khabbab. Umm Anmar develops a very painful illness from which she dies.

QURANIC SIGNS REVEALED: THE CRITERION (AL-FURQAN)

SIGNS 25:35-25:44

Makkah: Book 27: Moses (25:35)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (25:36)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (25:37)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad,

Salih and the People of Thamud (25:38)
Makkah: Book 25: The Companions of the Rass (25:39)
Makkah: *And, certainly, they approached the town*
where the reprehensible rain was rained down on them.
Is it that they see it not?
Nay! They had been not hoping for any rising up.
And when they saw you, (25:40)
they take you to themselves but in mockery:
Is this the one whom God raised up as a Messenger? (25:41)
He was about to cause us to go astray from our gods,
if it were not that we endured patiently in them!
And they will know at the time when they see the punishment,
who is one who goes astray from the way. (25:42)
Had you considered him who took to himself
his own desires as his god?
Would you, then, be over him a trustee? (25:43)
Or assume you that most of them hear or are reasonable?
They are not but as flocks. Nay!
They are ones who go astray from a way. (25:44)

COMMENTARY°

After this quick reference to earlier communities, the section mentions the ridicule faced by the Prophet Muhammad from his people. This follows upon the earlier mention of their arrogance and objection to the method of revelation of the Quran. The section also earlier described what will happen to them on the Day of Resurrection, and also the fate suffered by earlier ungrateful. All this is given by way of solace to the Prophet before mentioning the ridicule they direct at him. They are warned that they will be placed in a position lower than that of animals: *Nay! They had been not hoping for any rising up. And when they saw you, they take you to themselves but in mockery: Is this the one whom God raised up as a Messenger?* (25:41)

Had you considered him who took to himself his own desires as his god? Would you, then, be over him a trustee? (25:43) This sign is carefully phrased to paint a picture showing the psychological condition of a person who pays no heed to accepted standards or values. Instead, they only submit to their own desires and worship none but their own pleasure. They apply no standard, recognize no value, acknowledge no logic. Once their desire moves clearly in a particular direction, they follow like slaves submitting to a powerful master.

God, who is limitless in His glory, addresses His servant and Messenger in a kindly and compassionate manner, referring to this

type of person. He asks him: *Had you considered...* He follows this by drawing a picture of a person who pays no regard to truth, logic or sound argument. He comforts the Prophet so that he does not feel too disappointed at having failed to guide someone who has no propensity to follow guidance. Therefore, the Prophet need not concern himself with such people: *Would you, then, be over him a trustee?* (25:43)

All this is given by way of introduction to the ungratefuls' ridicule of the Prophet and their offensive remarks about him. The section immediately delivers a strong comment on this portraying them in a very contemptible light: *They are but as flocks. Nay, they are ones who go astray from a way.* (25:44)

The signs put them on the same level as animals which are devoid of hearing or logic. This is followed by yet more ridicule which shows such people as even inferior to animals: *Or assume you that most of them hear or are reasonable? They are not but as flocks. Nay! They are ones who go astray from a way.* (25:44)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 25:40-25:44

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

Prior to his choice as God's Messenger, Muhammad was highly respected among his people, being the descendant of a leading family and tribe. His honesty and morality enhanced his position, as he was nicknamed *al-amīn*, which meant 'the trustworthy'. When the community faced a serious dispute over which tribe should replace the Black Stone, they accepted him as arbiter. When he gathered them to give them the first news of his mission, he asked them whether they would believe him if he were to tell them that armed people were moving behind the hills, preparing to attack them, they said: Yes, because you enjoy our full trust.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

Yet when the Prophet told the ungrateful of his mission and recited to them this great book of divine revelations, they ridiculed him, saying: Is this the one whom God has sent as His emissary? This is cruel ridicule. Yet, were they so convinced that he deserved such ridicule, or that the message he preached also deserved it? Not at all! For it was all a scheme devised by the Quraysh elders to detract from his great personality and to counter the irresistible influence of the Quran. They felt that the new message constituted a threat to their social and economic positions. Therefore, they resorted to every conceivable means to counter it.

They convened meetings and conferences to devise plots and strategies, and to agree on what accusations they should level at Muhammad, knowing full well that they were only fabricating blatant lies.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues)

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message shows that our ego, our own desires, can become our god. Had **you**, Muhammad, considered him who took to himself his own desires as his god? Would **you**, Muhammad, then, be over him a trustee? Or assume **you**, Muhammad, that most of them hear or are reasonable? The ungrateful ridicule the Prophet and say that he is causing them to go astray from their gods, one of which is their own ego. We can also worship our own ego and our own desires instead of worshiping God. Our ego is our animal soul (*nafs al-ammarah*) and we have to guard against worshiping it instead of God. We may consider ourselves to be believers without recognizing that in many of our actions we are following our own ego and our own desires. We have an ego that has to be disciplined.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

When I focused on clarity, I began to notice when I was being unclear in communicating with others.

When I was reading, I began to notice when I was clear about what I was reading.

Lesson 42(5). Critical Thinking Intellectual Quranic Standard

Being Fair and Just (not self-serving or egocentric)

Having a sense fairness is described as in the Quran as having wisdom (*hikmah*). It is considered to be the ability to form judgments that are free from discrimination or dishonesty. Having wisdom in the Quranic sense is to have experience, knowledge and good or right judgment. Out of these develops a sense of impartiality so that we learn to weigh two differing points of view equally.

Developing a sense of fairness is the ability to make judgments free from discrimination or dishonesty. Having wisdom is to have experience, knowledge and good judgment. From this fair-mindedness or wisdom comes a sense of impartiality, that is, an inclination to weigh two views or opinions equally.

Using a sense of fairness when weighing two views or opinions helps us overcome any lingering egocentricity. We may have thought that we knew the truth only to find that we were wrong. We also learn not to judge any ideas until we are familiar with them and we have fully understood them.

Thinking critically, we are able to consider both the strengths and the weaknesses of differing points of view. We learn to put ourselves in place of others in order to understand them and what they are saying. We learn to overcome our self-centered point of view of identifying truth with our immediate perceptions or long-held beliefs. We gain the ability to accurately state the viewpoints and reasoning of others. We reason from premises, assumptions and ideas that are not our own. We can recall times when we were wrong but convinced that we were right. We begin to realize that our behavior and judgments affect others so that we learn to see things from another's point of view. We might ask ourselves:

The Ukaz Fair

On or about August 23, 613 CE (Dhul-Qadah 1, 9 BH) it was time for the annual Ukaz Fair. It lasted twenty-one days, and was held three days journey east of Makkah between Taif and Nakhiah, beginning the first day of the month of Dhul-Qadah, at the commencement of the three sacred months (followed by Dhul Hajjah and the first month of the year, Muharram. These were the months of a "holy truce" when the usually warring tribes laid aside their hatreds and warfare and concentrated on offering sacrifices to their pagan gods and visiting their "holy" sites. Pilgrims came from all over Arabia to attend the Fair.

The shady palm and cool fountain offered a grateful resting place. Goods were bartered, exhibitions of Bedouin chivalry held, and verses recited by poets of the various tribes. The successful

poems produced at this national gathering were treated with distinguished honor.

The Fair served as a locus for the literature of all Arabia: everyone with any pretensions to poetic power came, and if he could not himself gain the applause of the assembled people, at least he could form one of the critical audience on whose verdict rested the fame or the shame of every poet.

The Fair of Ukaz was a literary congress, without formal judges, but with unbounded influence. It was here that the polished heroes of the desert determined points of grammar and prosody; and here a magical language, the language of the Hijaz, was built out of the dialects of Arabia.

When the time of the fair came, a number of the Quraysh go to al-Walid ibn al-Mughayra, who was a man of some standing. He said to them: The time of the fair has come round again. Representatives of the Arabs will come to you. They will have heard about this fellow of yours, so agree upon one opinion without dispute so that none will give the lie to the other.

They replied: You give us your opinion about him.

He said: No, you speak and I will listen.

They said: He is a traitor (*kahin*).

He said: By God, he is not that, for he has not the unintelligent murmuring and rhymed speech of the traitor.

They said: Then he is possessed.

He said: No, he is not that. We have seen possessed ones, and here is no choking, spasmodic movements and whispering.

They said: Then he is a poet.

He said: No, he is no poet, for we know poetry in all its forms and meters.

They said: Then he is a sorcerer.

No, we have seen sorcerers arid their sorcery, and here is no spitting and no knots: *And from the worst of those who ... blow on knots* ... (113:4-113:5)

They asked: Then what are we to say, O Abu Abd al-Shams?

He replied: By God, his speech is sweet, his root is a palm-tree whose branches are fruitful and everything you have said would be known to be false. The nearest thing to the truth is your saying that he is a sorcerer, who has brought a message by which he separates a man from his father, or from his brother, or from his wife, or from his family.

At this point they left him, and began to sit on the paths that men take when they come to the fair. They warned everyone who passed them about Muhammad's doings.

Once at the Fair, the Messenger stands up and says: Oh people! Say: *There is no god but God* and be saved. Abu Lahab runs after him and says: People, this man is my nephew and he is mad.

QURANIC SIGNS REVEALED: THE CRITERION (AL-FURQAN)
SIGNS 25:45-25:60

Taif: *Have you not considered how your Lord stretched out the*
shade? And had He willed, He would have made it still.
Moreover, We made the sun an indicator over it. (25:45)
Makkah: *Again, We seized it to Us an easy seizing.* (25:46)
And it is He Who made the nighttime
a garment for you
and sleep a rest and made the daytime for rising. (25:47)
And it is He Who sent the winds,
bearers of good tidings in advance of His Mercy.
And We caused to descend undefiled water from heaven (25:48)
that We give life by it to a lifeless land and with it We satiate.
We created flocks on it and many humans. (25:49)
And, certainly, We diversified among them so that they recollect.
Then, most of humanity refused everything,
but ingratitude. (25:50)
And if We willed, We would have raised up
a warner in every town. (25:51)
So obey not the ones who are ungrateful
and struggle against them thereby with a great struggle. (25:52)
And it is He Who let forth the two seas
—this, agreeable and water of the sweetest kind
and this, salty, bitter.
He made between the two that which was unapproachable,
a banned barrier. (25:53)
And it is He Who created a mortal from water
and made for him kindred by blood and kin by marriage.
And your Lord had been ever Powerful. (25:54)
And they worship other than God
what neither profits them nor hurts them.
And the one who is ungrateful had been ever
a sustainer against his Lord. (25:55)
And We sent you not, but as one who gives good tidings
and as a warner. (25:56)
Say: I ask of you no compensation for this

but that whoever willed should take himself
on a way to his Lord. (25:57)
And put your trust in the Living
Who is Undying and glorify His praise.
And He sufficed to be aware
of the impieties of His servants, (25:58)
He Who created the heavens and the earth
and whatever is between the two in six days,
again, He turned His attention to the Throne.
The Merciful! Ask the aware, then, about Him. (25:59)
And when it was said to them:
Prostrate yourselves to The Merciful,
they said: And what is The Merciful?
Will we prostrate ourselves to what you have commanded us?
And it increased aversion in them. (25:60)

COMMENTARY°

Moving on, the section highlights an image of the night, its stillness and peaceful slumber, contrasted with the day and its bustling movement. *And it is He Who made the nighttime a garment for you and sleep a rest and made the daytime for rising.* (25:47)

The night spreads its cover over animate and inanimate objects so as to make the world appear as though it wears the blackness of the night. Therefore, the night is described as a garment. At night, movement stops and footsteps cease to allow people and most animals, birds and insects to sleep. Sleep is a cessation of sensation, consciousness and feeling, which is why it is described as 'repose'. Then the dawn starts to breathe and movement begins. Life is thus resumed. Therefore, the day is a new 'resurrection' after a short mini-death. The two alternate with every daily cycle of the earth. Again this phenomenon is ignored by human beings, but it is indicative of the great design of the universe made by God, who never sleeps or overlooks anything.

All life on earth depends on rain water, either directly, or through the rivers and other water courses, springs, wells and underground reservoirs it supplies. Only those who directly depend on rain for their living properly appreciate God's grace as He sends rain. They look forward to rain, full of hope, realizing that it brings them life. They look for wind, which they know to drive the clouds. Therefore, they realize that the wind is an early indicator, announcing the forthcoming act of God's grace, provided that they believe in God.

It is important to look at the last two signs very carefully: *And We caused to descend undefiled water from heaven.* (25:48) We note

how the concept of purity and purification points to the life brought about by rain: *that We give life by it to a lifeless land and with it We satiate. We created flocks on it and many humans.* (25:49) Thus, life is given an added aspect of purity, because God wants human life, and indeed all life on earth, to be pure of evil. Thus, He washes the face of the earth with pure water that brings life to an otherwise dead land, and which also serves as a pure drink for all creatures.

THE QURAN PURIFIES HEARTS

We have put it to them in a great variety of forms, styles and presentations, addressing it to their minds, hearts, souls and feelings. We sought to awaken their consciences to its import in numerous ways, employing different means to ensure that they interact with it. All it needs from them is that they should 'take it to heart.' *And, certainly, We diversified among them so that they recollect.* (25:50)

The point is that the Quran aims to remind people of a truth that is well established in their nature, even though they often forget it. What makes them heedless of it is the fact that they submit to their desires: *Then, most of humanity refused everything, but ingratitude.* (25: 50)

This means that the mission entrusted to God's Messenger is a very tough one. He faces the whole of humanity when the great majority of them choose to follow their desires, insisting on ingratitude despite the presence of numerous signs pointing to the truth of faith.

And if We willed, We would have raised up a warner in every town. (25:51) Such a course would have divided the task and made it easier to carry out. God, however, chose one of His servants, the last of His messengers, and required him to address all humanity, so as to give them the same message which remains free from local variations. God also gave His Messenger the Quran, so as to make it the address he drove home to them: *So obey not the ones who are ungrateful and struggle against them thereby with a great struggle.* (25:52)

This Quran has great power and influence. It is irresistible. When God's Messenger addressed the Arabs with it, it shook their hearts and consciences. They tried hard to counter its effects, employing every means at their disposal, but all their efforts were useless.

This betrayed their profound fear that the Quran would touch their own hearts and the hearts of their followers and that they would embrace the Quranic message. They were aware that it took only the reading of a couple of signs, or perhaps a section or two, by Muhammad, and listeners were so affected they accepted his message. To

them, it seemed like the Quran had a magic effect on people.

SEPARATING TYPES OF WATER

The section again portrays images from the world around us. Having spoken about winds heralding rain and its pure water, now it speaks of the great bodies of water, some of which are sweet and some salty, and how they do not mix.

And it is He Who let forth the two seas—this, agreeable and water of the sweetest kind and this, salty, bitter. He made between the two that which was unapproachable, a banned barrier. (25:53)

It is God who created both types and left them to run their courses, meeting at certain points. Nevertheless, their waters do not mix because they have a natural barrier keeping them apart. In most cases, rivers run at a level higher than the sea, which means that at the meeting point, it is the river with its sweet water that runs into the salty sea. It is very rare that a river runs below sea level. Therefore, the sea with its much greater body of water does not overpower the river whose water gives life to plants, animals and humans. The fact that this is the natural order in practically all cases where a river meets the sea means that it is certainly not coincidental. It happens by the will of the Creator who made the universe in such a way as to fulfil His purpose and remain subject to His laws of nature.

Indeed the natural laws God has set in operation ensure that the salty waters of sea and ocean do not overrun dry land or overpower rivers. This remains so even during high tides caused by the moon's gravity as it affects the earth's surface water.

As the section proceeds, it refers to a fluid that is totally different from the water pouring down from the skies, or moving along in seas and rivers. It mentions the sperm that gives rise to human life: *And it is He Who created a mortal from water and made for him kindred by blood and kin by marriage. And your Lord had been ever Powerful.* (25:54)

IN LEAGUE AGAINST GOD

In this atmosphere of careful planning of creation, and in the light of life that is produced by rain water and human sperm, the very thought of worshipping anyone other than God is incompatible with nature, as also singular and absurd. Therefore, the section refers to the ungrateful' worship and puts it in perspective: *And they worship other than God what neither profits them nor hurts them. And the one who is ungrateful had been ever a sustainer against his Lord.* (25:55))

The task of God's Messenger is defined: it is to give happy news

and issue a warning. *And We sent you not, but as one who gives good tidings and as a warner.* (25:56)

Say: I ask of you no compensation for this (25:57) God's Messenger does not entertain any thought of making any worldly gain or profit as a result of people's acceptance of the message. None will have to pay any fee or make any offering as he embraces the Quranic message. All that he needs to do is to say certain words verbally, provided that he believes in them with his heart. God's Messenger receives only one reward for all his troubles in advocating God's faith, and this reward is nothing other than the fact that someone answers the divine call and receives God's guidance: *but that whoever willed should take himself on a way to his Lord.* (25:57) Such are his only wages. When the Prophet sees someone accepting divine guidance and seeking to earn God's pleasure, then his compassionate heart finds comfort, and his noble conscience is set at ease.

And He sufficed to be aware of the impieties of His servants. (25:58) Everyone other than God is dead, because life comes to an end with death. The only one that remains is God, the Living One who does not die. If we rely on someone whose life comes to an end after a short or long time, then we are only putting our weight against a wall that will eventually collapse, or seeking shade that will inevitably fade away. To be truly assured one must rely only on the One who never dies, and place one's trust solely in Him.

And put your trust in the Living Who is Undying and glorify His praise. (25:58) The only one worthy of praise is God who grants all favors and blessings. Therefore the Prophet is instructed to leave alone those ungrateful who heed no warning and care for no happy news. He should give them up to Him since He knows their sins. Nothing is hidden from Him: *And He sufficed to be aware of the impieties of His servants.* (25:58)

Within the same context of God's limitless knowledge and His power to grant reward and inflict punishment, the section mentions the facts that He is the One who has created the heavens and the earth, and established Himself on the Throne:

He Who created the heavens and the earth and whatever is between the two in six days, again, He turned His attention to the Throne. The Merciful! Ask the aware, then, about Him. (25:59)

Together with God's greatness, control and might comes His all-encompassing mercy, and with it is joined His absolute knowledge: *The Merciful! Ask the aware, then, about Him.* (25:59) Thus, when you put your request to God, you are putting it to the One whose knowledge includes everything anywhere in the universe.

Setting the Universe to Order

Yet those impudent, shameless people behave discourteously when they are called upon to believe in God, the Most Merciful, and worship Him: *And when it was said to them: Prostrate yourselves to The Merciful, they said: And what is The Merciful? Will we prostrate ourselves to what you have commanded us? And it increased aversion in them.* (25:60)

Summary of Signs 25:47-25:60

Who is God?

The Quran always directs people's hearts and minds to reflect on, and interact with, what they see in the universe. They will then recognize the work of God's hand in all that they see, hear and feel. They will have much to reflect upon which will strengthen their bond with God through His work.

We see in this passage how the section paints a scene of shadows extending then gently contracting, before we move to a picture of a quiet night of deep slumber and a bustling day of tireless activity. We then see the winds as heralds of God's mercy, followed by water pouring down from the skies to quicken barren land. We see the salty sea and the sweet river water, and the barrier between them preventing them from mixing. Then we look at a different type of fluid, the semen that gives rise to human life. We contemplate how the heavens and the earth were created in six days, and look at the star constellations in the sky, with the sun as a lamp lightening the world for us, and the moon doing the same at night. We also contemplate the unfailing succession of night and day.

As it paints these images, the section directs our hearts and minds to reflect that they are all of God's creation, reminding us of His power and fine planning. It shows how singular the ungrateful' attitude is when they associate partners with God and worship alongside Him entities that can cause them neither benefit nor harm. The ungrateful are so ignorant that they speak impudently about God and support one another in denying Him. This is very strange, particularly when seen against the multitude of universal signs demonstrating God's creation. It is all a great display that the Creator raises before our eyes for us to contemplate.

How are the signs directed towards the Prophet Muhammad?

The Prophet is told to put his trust in The Living Who is Undying and to glorify His praise.

How are the signs directed towards the Community?

When the ungrateful are asked to prostrate themselves to The Merciful, they said: And what is The Merciful? Will we prostrate ourselves to what you, Muhammad, have commanded us? And it increased aversion in them.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message describes how the Creator created a barrier between two kinds of water: sweet and salty. What does the barrier symbolize between the two kinds of water that are in our body as well? An invisible barrier was created between the salty seas, the water of which evaporates to form clouds that then condense into rain and snow that feeds springs and rivers and then returns to the seas. Some commentators have seen this invisible barrier as symbolic of the separation between our ability to reason and our passionate soul and worldly needs. The word "barrier" (*barzakh*) appears three times in the Quran (23:100; 25:53 and 55:20). It is important for all life that this barrier between the two kinds of water exist. There is an important difference between sweet and salty water.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I tested myself before I went to class by trying to summarize, orally or in writing, the main points of the previous class meeting because I realize if I cannot summarize main points, I haven't learned them.

I learned to test my thinking using intellectual standards: Being clear, accurate, relevant, precise, reasonable.

LESSON 42(6). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
POINT OF VIEW, FRAME OF REFERENCE, PERSPECTIVE

Human thought is relational and selective. It is impossible to understand any person, event, or phenomenon from every vantage point simultaneously. Our purposes often control how we see things. Critical thinking requires that this fact be taken into account when analyzing and assessing thinking.

The point of view for this course on Quranic Studies is that of the Quran. All the words in the Quran are the Words of God as revealed to Prophet Muhammad. The Prophet related whatever was revealed to him through the Angel Gabriel (*ruh al-qudus*) with God's permission.

The Quranic point of view gives guidance to humanity through the prophetic mission, to bring people from the darkness of ignorance into the light of knowledge and wisdom. As 14:1 says: *This is a Book We caused to descend to you so that you have brought humanity out from the darkness into the light with the permission of their Lord to the path of The Almighty, The Worthy of Praise.* (14:1)

In the Quranic revelation, darkness is not just an individual's state of ignorance, but includes his worship of material gain in place of worshipping God, egoism, being a slave to his desires and being greedy, among other things.

On the level of society, darkness refers to injustice, oppression and/or discrimination and persecution as the sign to Moses (14:5) says: *Certainly, We sent Moses with Our signs saying: Bring out your folk from the shadows into the light and remind them of the Days of God. Truly, in that are signs for every enduring, grateful one.* (14:5)

The Quranic signs that refer to darkness or shadow and light always refer to darkness or shadow in the plural, while light is in the singular referring to the path of God-consciousness (*taqwa*).

QURANIC SIGNS REVEALED: THE CRITERION (AL-FURQAN)
SIGNS 25:61-25:77

Makkah: *Blessed be He*
Who made constellations in the heaven
and made in it a light-giving lamp
and an illuminating moon. (25:61)[16]
And He it is Who made the nighttime and the daytime
to follow in succession for who wanted to recollect,
or who wanted thankfulness. (25:62)
And the servants of The Merciful

are those who walk on the earth in meekness.
And when the ones who are ignorant addressed them,
they said: Peace! (25:63)
And those who spend the night with their Lord
as ones who prostrate themselves and are upright, (25:64)
and those who say: Our Lord!
Turn You away the punishment of hell from us.
Truly, its punishment will be continuous torment. (25:65)
How evil a habitation and resting place. (25:66)
And those who, when they spent,
neither exceed all bounds,
nor are they tightfisted,
but had been between that, a just stand: (25:67)
Whoever has repented and believed
and whose actions were done as one in accord with morality,
for those God will substitute for their evil deeds benevolence.
Madinah (25:68)
Madinah (25:69)
Madinah (25:70)
Makkah: *And whoever repented*
and did as one in accord with morality,
he, truly, repents to God, turning in repentance. (25:71)
And those who bear not witness to untruth
and if they passed by idle talk, they passed by nobly,(25:72)
and those who, when they were reminded
of the signs of their Lord,
fall not down unwilling to hear and unwilling to see (25:73)
and those who say: Our Lord! Bestow on us from our spouses
and our offspring the comfort of our eyes
and make us leaders of the ones who are God-conscious, (25:74)
those will be given recompense in the highest chambers
because they endured patiently.
They will be in receipt of greetings and peace, (25:75)
ones who will dwell in it forever.
Excellent it is for habitation and as a resting place! (25:76)
Say: My Lord would not concern Himself with you
if it had not been for your supplication,
for, surely, you denied so it will be close at hand. (25:77)

COMMENTARY°

Blessed, then, is the One who created the heavens and the earth, and created everything according to a definite measure. *Blessed is the One who Blessed be He Who made constellations in the heaven*

and made in it a light-giving lamp and an illuminating moon. And He it is Who made the nighttime and the daytime to follow in succession for who wanted to recollect, or who wanted thankfulness. (25:61-25:62)

THE DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF FAITH

And the servants of The Merciful are those who walk on the earth in meekness. And when the ones who are ignorant addressed them, they said: Peace! (25:63)

The true servants' first feature is that they walk gently, with no affectation, pretension, or display of arrogance. Like every movement they make, walking delivers an expression of one's personality and feelings.

In their serious and dignified approach, and in their attention to serious concerns, God's true servants do not bother themselves with other people's absurdities and stupidities. They do not waste their time or energy in futile arguments with such people. They recognize that engaging in an argument with people who argue for argument's sake is fruitless. Therefore: *And when the ones who are ignorant addressed them, they said: Peace!* (25:63) But this is by no means a sign of weakness or lack of ability. It is simply a dignified approach which does not permit them to waste time and energy over what is unbecoming of the honorable.

Such is their conduct in daytime when they are with other people. At night they reflect their God-fearing nature, as they stand in awe of God and fear His punishment, who stay up far into the night in adoration of their Lord, prostrating themselves and standing; who pray: (25:64-25:66)

In their formal prayers, with all its movements, and all their inner feelings, they are fully conscious of their Lord, fearing to incur His displeasure and so His punishment. Thus they appeal to Him: *And those who say: Our Lord! Turn You away the punishment of hell from us. Truly, its punishment will be continuous torment. How evil a habitation and resting place.* (25:65-25:66) They have not seen hell or its suffering, but they believe in it. They also visualize it according to its descriptions in the Quran and in the Prophet's statements. Thus their genuine fear of it is the fruit of true faith.

STEERING AWAY FROM SIN

God's true servants lead a balanced life that is exemplary in its seriousness and moderation: *And those who, when they spent, neither exceed all bounds, nor are they tightfisted.* (25:67) Balance is the distinctive feature that the Quran establishes in the life of the indi-

vidual and the community. Its achievement is what the Quran aims for through educating its followers and through its legal system. Its whole structure is based on balance and moderation.

As the Quran seeks to regulate this aspect of human life, it begins with the individual, making the adoption of a balanced approach in life a feature of faith. Thus, whenever true servants of God, the Most Merciful, put their money to use, they: *but had been between that, a just stand.* (25:67)

ERASING SIN THROUGH REPENTANCE

But the door remains open for anyone who wishes to save himself from such a fate. This requires repentance, firm belief and good action: *Whoever has repented and believed and whose actions were done as one in accord with morality.* (25:70) Those who fulfil these three conditions are promised that whatever sin they did prior to their repentance will be changed into good deeds which will be added to their newly earned good actions: *for those God will substitute for their evil deeds benevolence.* (25:70) This is an aspect of God's bounty that is granted without the person concerned having to do anything to deserve it other than turn away from error and seek refuge with Him: *And God had been Forgiving, Compassionate.* (25:70)

The door of repentance is always open to admit anyone whose conscience is reawakened and wants to return to the fold. No one is ever turned away from it, no matter who he might be or what sins he might have committed in the past.

There is a rule for repentance and a condition for its acceptance, which are clearly spelled out: *And whoever repented and did as one in accord with morality, he, truly, repents to God, turning in repentance.* (25:71) Repentance begins with genuine regret and desisting from bad deeds and is made complete through doing good deeds that prove that it is a serious and genuine repentance. At the same time, good deeds produce a positive sense that favorably compensates for abandoning sin. Sin is an action which, when withdrawn, leaves a vacuum that must be filled with an action in the opposite direction. Otherwise, the feeling of emptiness makes one miss one's old sinful ways. Therefore we see here a remarkable feature of the Quranic method of cultivating goodness within the community of believers. It is based on profound knowledge of human nature. Who can know this better than the Creator?

FURTHER QUALITIES OF TRUE BELIEVERS

Having completed this interposition of the conditions of repen-

tance, the section resumes its outline of the qualities of the true servants of the Most Merciful: *And those who bear not witness to untruth.* (25:72) This may be taken literally which means that they never give false testimony, since such an action leads to usurping people's rights and helps injustice. It may also be taken to mean that they do not attend any place or stay with any group where falsehood is said or done. They steer away from such places or company so as not to be party to anything that happens there. This is a more powerful meaning. They also steer away from all frivolity and idle talk: *and if they passed by idle talk, they passed by nobly.* (25:72) They remove themselves from participation in any such practice. A believer has more serious preoccupations that leave no time for frivolous and idle pursuits. His mind is as to ensure that God's message is delivered to humanity. This is sufficient preoccupation for anyone.

Another of their qualities is that they are quick to remember when a reminder is given to them. Their hearts are open to the understanding of God's signs and revelations: *And those who, when they were reminded of the signs of their Lord, fall not down unwilling to hear and unwilling to see.* (25:73) The picture drawn here is critical of the idolaters who approach their deities and false beliefs like the deaf and blind, deprived of guidance and light.

Finally, these true servants of God are not content with staying up far into the night offering their voluntary worship, prostrating themselves to God, and allowing their other fine qualities to shine. They want something more. What they hope for is that they should have spouses of their type and children who follow in their footsteps, thus bringing them great joy. Not only so, but in this way, those who are classified as God's servants will multiply. They also pray that God will make of them a good example for those who are God-conscious: *And those who say: Our Lord! Bestow on us from our spouses and our offspring the comfort of our eyes and make us leaders of the ones who are God-conscious.* (25:74)

DESTINED FOR THE FINEST ABODE

What reward do God's true servants receive? This outline of their qualities concludes with what they earn: *Those will be given recompense in the highest chambers because they endured patiently. They will be in receipt of greetings and peace, ones who will dwell in it forever. Excellent it is for habitation and as a resting place!* (25:75-25:76)

The Arabic text uses the term *al-ghurfah*, which is translated here as *the highest chambers.* The term may be taken to mean in this context either heaven, or a special place in heaven. Linguistically

speaking it means, 'a chamber or room', which is a more honorable place than the reception room where Arabs normally received their guests. True servants are received in this high position with a warm welcome, on account of their patient endurance of whatever they had to put up with in order to maintain their sound qualities. What is implied here is recognition of the strong will-power needed to restrain desire and resist temptation. This is not easy to do without a good degree of endurance that can only be shown by someone who is deservedly mentioned by God in His book, the Quran.

With the picture of God's true servants fully drawn, showing them as the cream of humanity, the section concludes by stating that humanity are worth very little in God's sight, except for the fact that some of them turn to Him in prayer. As for those who deny Him and His messages, they will be punished. *Say: My Lord would not concern Himself with you if it had not been for your supplication, for, surely, you denied so it will be close at hand.* (25:77)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 25:61-25:77

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

This final passage of the section portrays the distinctive features of the true servants of God, The Merciful. They appear to be the highest model of humanity that remains after the end of the long battle between true guidance and error, between those who impertinently deny the truth and God's messengers who bring His guidance for humanity. They seem to be the fruit ripening after such a long struggle. They are the ones who bring comfort to the bearer of divine guidance, after they had been met with denial and rejection.

The previous passage recounted the impertinent remark of the ungrateful when they said that they did not know the name of The Merciful, as belonging to God. In this passage we have a full description of 'the true servants of the Most Merciful' who know Him well and deserve to be described as belonging to Him. The section shows their distinctive features as reflected in their behavior and the way they conduct their lives. They provide a living example of the Muslim community which the Quranic message aims to build, and the type of person it moulds through the implementation of its perfect system. These are the ones who deserve God's care.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message describes the characteristics of servants of The Merciful. What are the characteristics of the servants of The Merciful? They walk on the earth in meekness. When those who are ignorant address them, they say: Peace! They spend the night with their Lord in prayer and prostration. They are upright. They ask God to turn the punishment of hell away from them. They are neither extravagant nor tightfisted, but somewhere in the middle taking just stands on issues. They repent and believe and act as ones in accord with morality. They refuse to bear witness to lies and turn aside from idle talk. When they hear the signs of their Lord being recited, they fall down willingly listening and willingly seeing. These are the characteristics that the servant of the Merciful develops. The servant of the Merciful used here is a new phrase for the early believers. The consequences of having these characteristics is a place in the highest chambers. That those who are listening to this recitation for the first time will strive to develop these characteristics.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

Remember what you said about these people before we studied them?
Which of our original beliefs were false or misleading?
Why did we think that way? Where did we get these ideas?
How do people come to think they know what other people are like before they know anything about them?
What false beliefs might other people have about us? Why

APPENDIX 1: LIFE OF THE PROPHET IN YEAR 4 OF THE REVELATION

LESSON 39(1). QURANIC CHAPTER 7: THE ELEVATED PLACES (AL-ARAF)

SIGNS 7:1-7:10

Wahidi says in regard to (7:32): *Say: They are for those who believed in this present life and, exclusively* (for them), *on the Day of Resurrection. Thus, We explain distinctly the signs for a folk who know.* (7:32): Some of the Bedouins used to circumambulate the Sacred House completely naked to the extent that their women circumambulated the House completely naked except for straps—like the straps placed on the faces of donkeys to protect them from flies—placed around their lower parts, reciting: Today some or all of it will show. And whatever appears of it, I do not make it lawful.[1]

It was the norm according to the religion which they followed (Hums) that, when they went to pilgrimage and returned from Mina, none of them was allowed to go round the House with the clothes which they wore. And so, whoever wanted to go round the House had to undress and put his clothes aside until after circumambulation.[2] This act was supposed to display more piety from the person who did it. Then God revealed about them: *Say: Who forbade the adornment of God which He brought out for His servants. And what is the good of His provision? Say: They are for those who believed in this present life and, exclusively, on the Day of Resurrection. Thus, We explain distinctly the signs for a folk who know.*(7:32). This was revealed about those who go round the Sacred House naked.[3]

During the days of pilgrimage, people of the pre-Quranic period ate very little and refrained from fats as a sign of their glorification of pilgrimage. The Muslims said: O Messenger of God, we have a better right to do that', and as a result, God revealed (and eat) meat and fats (and drink).[4]

LESSON 39(5) QURANIC CHAPTER 7: THE ELEVATED PLACES (AL-ARAF)

SIGNS 7:48-7:53

Ibn Abbas:[5] *Are these, those about whom you swore an oath that God would never impart mercy? Enter the Garden. There will be neither fear in you nor will you feel remorse.* (7:49): O Walid Ibn al-Mughayrah! O Abu Jahl Ibn Hisham! O Umayyah Ibn Khalaf! O Ubayy Ibn Khalaf al-Jumahi! O Aswad Ibn Abd al-Muttalib! O lead-

ers! (What did your multitude) of wealth and servants (and that in which you took your pride) which made you scorn belief in Muhammad and the Quran (avail you?) *The Companions of the Elevated Places would cry out to men whom they would recognize by their mark. They would say: Your amassing availed you not, nor that you had been growing arrogant.* (7:48)

Then, they looked at the dwellers of Paradise: Salman al-Farsi, Suhayb al-Rumi, Ammar Ibn Yasir and all the other believers who lacked tribal support, and said: *Are these, those about whom you swore an oath that God would never impart mercy? Enter the Garden. There will be neither fear in you nor will you feel remorse.* (7:49)

LESSON 39(7). QURANIC CHAPTER 7: THE ELEVATED PLACES (AL-ARAF)

SIGNS 7:54-7:58

The directive: *Call to your Lord humbly and inwardly. Truly, He loves not the ones who exceed the limits.* (7:55) is made at the most appropriate point, with human beings in the proper frame of mind. They are directed to call upon their Lord and address Him with humility and submission. They should also call on Him in the secrecy of their hearts, not making loud noises. A secret appeal to God is much more befitting because it affirms the close relationship between us and our Lord. Muslim, the renowned hadith scholar, relates this authentic hadith on the authority of Abu Musa who reports: We were with God's Messenger on one of his travels—(in one version it is stated that this took place when they were on a military expedition)—and people started to glorify God out loud. God's Messenger said to them: O you people, gently and quietly. You are not calling on someone who is deaf or absent. You are calling on the One who hears all and is close at hand. He is indeed with you.

LESSON 39(11). QURANIC CHAPTER 7: THE ELEVATED PLACES (AL-ARAF)

SIGNS 7:172-7:181

Ibn Abbas, a companion of the Prophet who is renowned for his scholarship, reports: *And mention when your Lord took from the Children of Adam—from their generative organs—their offspring and called to them to witness of themselves: Am I not your Lord? They said: Yea! We bore witness so that you say not on the Day of Resurrection: Truly We had been ones who were heedless of this.* (7:172)

Both al-Bukhari and Muslim relate in their authentic collections, a hadith narrated by Abu Hurayrah who quotes the Prophet as saying: Every human being is born with upright nature. [One version puts the statement as: every human being is born believing in this faith.] His parents then make him a Jew, a Christian, or a Magian.

A hadith related by Muslim quotes the Prophet as saying: God says I have created My servants following the pure faith. Satans then assaulted them and removed them from their faith, forbidding them what I have made lawful.

Al-Aswad ibn Sari, one of the Prophet's Companions who belonged to the Saad clan reports: I joined God's Messenger in four expeditions. Once, when our people had killed enemy fighters, they also attacked their children. On hearing this, the Prophet was very angry and rebuked them, saying: How is it that some people attack children?

One man said: Messenger of God, are they not the children of ungrateful?

He said: The best among you have been born to the ungrateful. Let it be known that every human being is born following the right faith. He will continue to do so until he is able to express himself. His parents then make of him a Jew or a Christian.[6]

LESSON 39(13). QURANIC CHAPTER 7: THE ELEVATED PLACES (AL-ARAF)

SIGNS 7:189-7:206

There are various reports suggesting different situations when the order applies to listen attentively and in silence to Quranic recitation (7:204). Some scholars are of the view that it applies in obligatory prayer when the imam reads aloud. An authentic hadith related by Imam Ahmad as well as Abu Dawud, al-Tirmidhi, al-Nasai and Ibn Majah mentions a report by Abu Hurayrah that one day, on finishing a prayer in which he recited aloud, the Prophet said: Has any of you recited something of the Quran while I was reciting?

A man said: Yes, Messenger of God!

The Prophet said: I was wondering why the Quran was being pulled away from me.

From that day, people stopped reciting the Quran in prayer when the Prophet was reciting aloud.

Another report mentions that Abd Allah ibn Masud, a leading scholar among the Prophet's Companions, was praying when he heard some people in the congregation reciting the Quran with the imam. When he finished, he said: When will you understand? When

will you use your reason? You must do as God has commanded you: *And when the Quran was recited, listen and pay heed so that perhaps you will find mercy.* (7:204)

In reply to them, God revealed this sign: *And when the Quran was recited, listen and pay heed so that perhaps you will find mercy.* (7:204) Al-Qurtubi mentions this and says that it was revealed in relation to prayer.

Another reason for revealing this sign is mentioned by Ibn Jarir al- Tabari who quotes Abd Allah ibn Masud as saying: Some of us used to greet others in prayer, but then the Quranic sign was revealed which says: *And when the Quran was recited, listen and pay heed so that perhaps you will find mercy.* (7:204)

In his commentary on the Quran, al-Qurturbi mentions a report by Muhammad ibn Kab al-Qurazi who says: When God's Messenger used to recite the Quran aloud in prayer, those in the congregation recited with him.

When he said: In the Name of God, The Merciful, The Compassionate,'they would say likewise, until he finished reciting the Opening Chapter and another section.

The situation continued like that for some time until the sign was revealed which says: *And when the Quran was recited, listen and pay heed so that perhaps you will find mercy.* (7:204) This suggests that the order to listen attentively to the Quran means to stop reciting it aloud with the Prophet when he recited it in prayer.

Al-Qurturbi also mentions a report by Qatadah concerning this sign, which says: A man may come when a prayer is in progress and ask people in the congregation: How many cycles have you completed? How many are left?

Then God revealed this sign: *And when the Quran was recited, listen and pay heed so that perhaps you will find mercy* .(7:204)

Mujahid also mentions that they used to speak in prayer, and then God ordered them to listen so that they may be graced with mercy.

Those who consider this sign to apply only to recitation in formal prayer quote a report mentioned by al-Tabari which mentions that a man named Talhah saw Ata ibn Abi Rabiah, a leading scholar, talking to Ubayd ibn Umayr when a man was reciting the Quran. Talhah said to them: Should you not be listening to the recitation so that you receive what has been promised (i.e. referring to God's mercy which is promised to those who listen attentively to the Quran)?

They looked at me, and continued their conversation.

I repeated what I said, and they looked at me and said: That relates to formal prayer.

In his commentary on the Quran, Ibn Kathir also mentions that Sufyan al-Thawri, a leading scholar of the early period of the Quranic message, also mentions that this sign applies to formal prayer only. Several scholars are of the view that if a person is reciting the Quran in any situation other than formal prayer, then people may speak if they wish.

Other scholars, such as Said ibn Jubayr, Amr ibn Dinar, Yazid ibn Aslam and Abdullah ibn al-Mubarak suggest that the Quranic sign applies to recitation in formal prayer and in sermons that are given on Fridays and on weekdays. Al-Qurtubi says that such a suggestion is not practically sound, because the Quran constitutes only a small portion of such sermons, when people are required to listen to all the sermon. Besides, this sign is a Makkan revelation, when there was no sermon or Friday prayer held in Makkah.

Al-Qurturbi mentions in his commentary on the Quran a report by al-Naqqash who says: All commentators on the Quran are unanimous that listening attentively to the Quran in obligatory and voluntary prayer is a binding duty. Al-Nuhhas says: From the linguistic point of view, this attentive listening must apply in all situations, unless we have cause to believe that it is restricted.

LESSON 42(4). QURANIC SIGNS REVEALED: THE CRITERION (AL-FURQAN)

SIGNS 25:61-25:77

A hadith related by al-Tabarani mentions that Abu Farwah asked the Prophet: If a person has committed all kinds of sin, leaving out nothing, will his repentance be accepted? The Prophet asked him: Are you a Muslim? When he answered in the affirmative, the Prophet said: Then do what is good and abandon what is evil, and God will change all your past misdeeds into good ones. The man asked: And even my worst, treacherous ones? The Prophet said: Yes. The man glorified God and continued to do so as he went away.

CONVERSIONS RECORDED CONTINUING DURING YEAR 4

Some of the early converts when Prophet Muhammad was in the House of Arqam are:

Adiyy or Makhzum Clan

Four sons of Abu al-Bukhayr, a confederate of the family of Khattab, a descendent from Kinana through an off-shoot more ancient than that of the Quraysh, are the first to convert in the house of Arqam. This family is included among the Dudan branch.[7]

Amir ibn Abi Bukayr

Aqil ibn Abi Bukayr: His name had been Ghafil, meaning negligent. When he gave his allegiance to Muhammad, Muhammad changed his name to Aqil, meaning "intelligent."

Iyas ibn Abi Bukayr

Khalid ibn Abi Bukayr

We may then conclude that, although Umar, al-Khattab's son, was not yet converted, the new doctrine was already spreading rapidly among his connections.

Walid ibn al-Walid: Al-Zubayr ibn Ukasha ibn Abd Allah ibn Abu Ahmad told me that he was told that some men of Makhzum clan had gone to Hisham ibn al-Walid when his brother al-Walid ibn al-Walid had become a follower of Muhammad. They had agreed to seize some young men who had become Muslims, among whom were Salma ibn Hisham and Ayyash ibn Abu Rabia. They were afraid of his violent temper and so they said: We wish to admonish these men because of this religion which they have newly introduced; thus we shall be safe in the case of others.

All right, he said, admonish him, but beware that you do not kill Walid. Be careful of his life, for I swear by God that if you kill him, I will kill the noblest of you to the last man.

They said: God damn the man. After what he has said who will want to bring trouble on himself, for, by God, if this man were killed while in our hands the best of us would be killed to a man.

So they left him and withdrew, and that was how God protected him from them.

Salma ibn Hisham

Ayyash ibn Abu Rabia

Abd al-Dar Clan

Musab ibn Umayr ibn Hashim ibn Abd Manaf: It may be through the connection of his brothers, Abu al-Rum ibn Umary, Firas ibn al-Nadr ibn al-Harith and Jahm ibn Qays ibn Abd ibn Surahbil that Musab ibn Umary visits the house of Arqam, listens to the words of Muhammad and embraces his doctrine. However, he is afraid to publicly confess his change of faith because his tribe and his mother are very fond of him and oppose to Muhammad. His conversion is noticed and his family imprisons him at home and keeps him under pressure. He escapes and goes to Abyssinia with the first Muslim emigrants. The Prophet later sends him to Madinah after the first oath of Aqaba to instruct the Helpers in the learning the Quran.[8]

Abu Fukayha (Yasar): Shortly after the House of Arqam is made into a meeting place of Muslims, Abu Fukayha converts. Abu Fukayha is better known as Yasar [according to Wahidi]. He is frequently mentoned as one of the converts who suffered most severely in the early persecutions.[9]

Fukayha bint Yasar: Abu Fukayha's daughter accepts the Quranic message. She is married to Hattab, a convert, who migrated to Abyssinia. (Hatib and Mumir are mentioned by Ibn Hisham as sons of Harith of the Jumah Clan. Waqidi places his genealogy to Mumir[10] but makes Hatib and Hattab sons of the Amr clan of the Amir ibn Luaay.[11]

Non-Quraysh:

Suhayb ibn Sinan is the first Greek convert. His family had said that he had led from Constantinople to Makkah and voluntarily placed himself under the guardianship of Abd Allah. Sinan's home had been at Mosul or some neighboring village in Mesopotamia. His father, or his uncle, had been the Persian governor of Ubolla. A Grecian band having made a raid into Mesopotamia, carry him off while yet a boy to Syria, perhaps to Constantinople. Bought afterwards by a party of Bedouin, he is sold at Makkah to the chief, Ibn Judan, who gives him freedom and protection. A fair skin and ruddy complexion mark his northern birth, and broken Arabic betrays a foreign education. He acquires considerable wealth at Makkah, but having converted, and being left by the death of his former master without a patron, he suffers much at the hands of the unbelieving Quraysh.[12]

Jabr: Jabr is a Christian servant of a family from Hadhramaut.[13]

Ammar: Ammar accepts the Quranic message in the House of Arqam at the same time as Suhayb. Ammar's father is Yasir, a stranger from Yemen. His mother is Sumayah and his brother Abd Allah are also believers. Yasir belonged to a tribe in Yemen of the Madhij or Qahlan stock. He with two brothers visit Makkah to seek out their maternal relatives. Instead of returning to Yemen he remains behind with his patron, Abu Hudayifa who gives him in marriage to his slave girl Sumayah. She bears Ammar.[14]

APPENDIX 2: CORRELATION BETWEEN THE PRESENT ORDER OF CHAPTERS IN THE QURAN AND THEIR CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

1 = 96
2 = 68
3 = 73
4 = 74
5 = 1
6 = 111
7 = 81
8 = 87
9 = 92
10 = 89
11 = 93
12 = 94
13 = 103
14 = 100
15 = 108
16 = 102
17 = 107
18 = 109
19 = 105
20 = 113
21 = 114
22 = 112
23 = 53
24 = 80
25 = 97
26 = 91
27 = 85
28 =95
29 = 106
30 = 101
31 = 75
32 = 104
33 = 77
34 = 50
35 = 90
36 = 86
37 = 54
38 = 38
39 = 7
40 = 72
41 = 36
42 = 25
43 = 35
44 = 19
45 = 20
46 = 56
47 = 26
48 = 27
49 = 28
50 = 17
51 = 10
52 = 11
53 = 12
54 = 15
55 = 6
56 = 37
57 = 31
57 = 34
59 = 39
60 = 40
61 = 41
62 = 42
63 = 43
64 = 44
65 = 45
66 = 46
67 = 51
68 = 88
69 = 18
70 = 16
71 = 71
72 = 14
73 = 21
74 = 23
75 = 32
76 = 52
77 = 67
78 = 69
79 = 70
80 = 78
81 = 79
82 = 82
83 = 84
84 = 30
85 = 29
86 = 83
87 = 2
88 = 8
89 = 3
90 = 33
91 = 60
92 = 4
93 = 99
94 = 57
95 = 47
96 = 13
97 = 55
98 = 76
99 = 65
100 = 78
101 = 59
102 = 24
103 = 22
104 = 63
105 = 58
106 = 49
107 = 66
108 = 64
109 = 61
110 = 62
111 = 48
112 = 5
113 = 9
114 = 110

NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION

1. The rough equation that earlier Muslim scholars drew between the Islamic and Western conceptions of reason tended to be oblivious of the categories of reason and the Western critique of reason that divided it into "instrumental reason, critical reason, functional reason, abstract reason, imperialist reason, decentering reason" and the like. For details see Abdelwahab M. Elmessiri, "Features of the New Islamic Discourse," a Cairo conference paper, 1997: http:// www.21stcenturytrust.org/messiri.doc.

2. Some commentators have distinguished a total of 30 expressions that revolve around thinking over the *ayat*. See Abu Bakr al-Razi, *Tafsir al-Kabir* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1985), II, 222f.

3. Cf Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-'Ilm fi'l-Quran al-Karim* (Cairo: Maktaba Wahba, 1416/1996), 36.

4. Al-Isfahani, *Mufradat Alfaz al-Qur'an*, under "*Fikr*".

5. Cf., Karim Douglas Crow, "Islam and Reason" in *Al-Shajarah*, vol. 8, (2003),120-1.

6. Abbas Mahmud, "al-Aqqad, Al-Tafkir Faridah Islamiyyah" (Thinking is an Islamic Obligation) quoted in Jamal Badi and Mustapha Tajdin, *Creative Thinking: An Islamic Perspective*, 2nd edn. (Kuala Lumpur: International Islamic University Malaysia, 2005), 6.

7. Cf. al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-'Ilm*, 41-45 quoting ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's *Miftah Dar al-Sa'ada*, and 'Aqqad's book entitled *al-Tafkir Faridah Islamiyya* (Beirut: al-Matba'a al-'Asriyya, 1992).

8. Cf. al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-Ilm*, 200.

9. Cf .Ibid., 202.

10. Al-Raghib al-Isfahani, *Mufradat Alfaz al-Quran* (Beirut: Dar al-Shamiyya, 1383/1964), 249.

11. Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i, *al-Mizan fi-Tafsir al-Quran* (Beirut: al-Mu'assasa al-'Alami, 1383/1964) II, 395.

12. Ala uddin al-Mattagi al-Hindi, *Kanz al-Ummah fi Sunan al-Aqwal wa'l-Af'al* (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risalah, 1383/1981), hadith no. 5873.

13. Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali, *Risalat al-Radd 'ala al-Laduniyya*, ed. 'Abd Allah Riyad Mustafa, (Damascus: Dar al-Hikma, 1986), 241.

14. CE Ahmad Fu'ad al-Ahwani, *al-Tarbiyah fi'l-Islam* (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif bi-Misr, 1968), 227-228.

15. Cf. Aziz al-Azmeh, *Arabic Thought and Islamic Societies* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 109.

16. Cf. Diane F. Halpern, *Thought and Knowledge: An Introduction to Critical Thinking* (Mahwah: New Jersey, Lawrence Erlbaum and Associates, 1996), 21.

17. Cf. Ibrahim B. Syed, "Critical Thinking" as online at http://www.lrfi. org/articles/articles_101_150/critical_thinking.htm.

(18. Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Lahore: Shah Muhammad Ashraf, reprint 1982), 127.

19. Malik Bin Nabi, *Intaj al-Mustashriqin* (Cairo: Maktabah 'Amir, 1990), 34.

20. Iqbal, op. cit., 139.

21. See for details Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, *What's Right with Islam is What's Right with America* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2004), 4-5.

22. Georg W. H. Hegel, *Philosophy of History* (New York: Dove Books, 1956), 109.

23. Louay Safi, "The Creative Mission of the Muslim Minorities in the West: Synthesizing the Ethos of Islam and modernity," a conference paper presented at Westminster University, London, England February 21, 2004: http://insight.org/articles/Current/MuslimMinorities.htm.

24. Cf., M.H. Kamali, "Islam, Rationality and Science," in Islam and Science, vol. 1, no. 2 (2003), 126f, see also Mehdi Golshani, "Philosophy of Science from the Qur'anic Perspective," in *Towards Islamisation of Disciplines* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1989), 73f.

25. Cf. Ishfaq Ahmad, "Research and Development Culture in the Islamic World: Past and Present Problems and Future Directions," in Abu Bakr Abdul Majeed et al. (eds.) *New Knowledge, Research and Development in the Muslim World* (Kuala Lumpur: Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia, 2004), 14-15.

26. See for a discussion Oliver Leaman, "Institutionalising Research and Development Culture in the Islamic and Non-Islamic World: A Comparative Perspective," in Abu Bakr Majeed, (ed.) *New Knowledge*, 50-51.

27. Malik bin Nabi, *Intaj al-Mustashriqin*, 26.

28. See for details Mohammad Hashim Kamali, "Issues in the Understanding of Jihad and Ijtihad" in *Islamic Studies* 41 (2002), 623 ff.

29. There is a chapter on *ijtihad* in M. H. Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1991, 3rd edn. 2003). See also my article "Issues in the Understanding of Jihad and Ijtihad" in *Islamic Studies*, 41 (2002), 617-635; and "Issues in the Legal Theory and Usul and Prospects for Reform" in *Islamic Studies*, 40 (2001), 1-21.

30. Sergio Moravia. *The Enigma of the Mind: The Mind-Body Problem in Contemporary Thought*, tr. S. Staton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. First published in Rome, 1986), 4-5.

31. See for example, Howard Gardner, *Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligence for the 21st Century* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

32. See for details Roger Garudy, "The Balance Sheet of Western Philosophy in this Century" in *Towards Islamisation of Disciplines* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1989), 399f.

33. Mehdi Golshani, "From Knowledge to Wisdom: A Qur'anic Perspective," in *Islamic Studies*, 44 (2005), 13.

34. Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Fiqh al-Awlawiyyat*, 68.

35. Cf., Al-Ahwani, *al-Tarbiyah fi'l-Islam*, 189.

36. Mohammad Hashim Kamali is Professor of Islamic Law and jurisprudence at the International Islamic University Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur. "Reading the Signs," Center for Islam and Science. Gale Group, 2006.

NOTES TO THE TEXT *BOOK YEAR 4*

1. Ibn Hamid from Salama from Ibn Ishaq from Abd Allah ibn al-Ghaffar ibn al-Qasim from al-Minhal ibn Amr from Abd Allah ibn al-Harith ibn Nawfal ibn al-Harith ibn Abd al-Muttalib from Abd Allah ibn Abbas from Ali ibn Abu Talib.

2. See Appendix 1: Lesson 39(1)

3. Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al-Quran al-Azim*, Beirut, Vol. 2, pp. 193-194)

4. Ali Shariati, *Fatima is Fatima*, translated by Laleh Bakhtiar. Tehran, Iran: Hamdami Foundation, 1980, p. 82, incorporated in *Shariati on Shariati*.

5. See Appendix 1: Lesson 39(3)

6. See Appendix 1: Lesson 39(6)

7. Osman Bakar, "Reflections on Islamic Environmentalism."

8. See Appendix 1: Lesson 39(7)

9. *Kitab al-Waqidi*.

10. See Introduction.

11. Paul, R. (1993). *Critical Thinking: What Every Student Needs to Survive in a Rapidly Changing World*, Dillon Beach, CA: Foundation for Critical Thinking.)

12. See Appendix 1: Lesson 39(11)

13. See Appendix 1: Lesson 39(13).

14. I was told this by Yahya ibn Urwa ibn al-Zubayr, on the authority of his father, from Abd Allah ibn Amr ibn al-As, Ibn Ishaq, *Life of Muhammad*.

15. Related by Bukhari and Muslim.

16. See Appendix 1: 42(6)

17. *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p 224.

18. *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p 227.

NOTES TO APPENDIX 1

1. Ibn Abbas said: Said ibn Muhammad al- Adi informed us> Abu Amr ibn Hamdan> al-Hasan ibn Sufyan> al-Hasan ibn Hammad al-Warraq> Abu Yahya al-Himmani> ... > Sa'id ibn Jubayr.

2. Ibid.

3. Abu Salamah ibn Abd al-Rahman said: Al-Hasan ibn Muhammad al-Farisi informed us> Muhammad ibn Abd Allah ibn Hamdun> Ahmad ibn al-Hasan al-Hafiz> Muhammad ibn Yahya> Ismail ibn Uways> his brother> Sulayman ibn Bilal> Muhammad ibn Abi Atiq> Ibn Shihab.

4. Said al-Kalbi

5. Ibn Abbas, *Commentary on the Quran*.

6. See *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih al-Muslim*.

7 *Kitab al-Waqidi* pp 196, 256 ½.

8. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba*, IV, pp 368-370.

9. *Kitab al-Wahidi*, p 227.

10. *Kitab al-Wahidi*, p 259.

11. *Kitab al-Wahidi*, p 260.

12. Chapter 16:105; see also 15:5 and 44:13, *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p 222. Perhaps 16:103 and 44:4 and 25:4 were revealed about him.

13. *Kitab al-Wahidi*, p 227.

14. Freed by Abu Judan and Abd Allah. *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p 224.

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Laleh Bakhtiar

Critical Thinking and the Chronological Quran in the Life of Prophet Muhammad

The Year 5

of the Revelation

(9 BH/613-614 CE)

Revised Edition

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PREFACE

THE CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STUDIES TEXTBOOK SERIES

There are thirty books in this series. Books entitled *Book Year 1* to *Book Year 24* consist of one book for each year of the revelation. The chapters' or sections' signs (*ayat*) are presented according to the 558 *ruku* or sections of the 114 chapters of the Quran. They each include the relevant chapter (*surah*) or chapters (when they are short) or sections, *ruku* (when there are multiple sections in a particular chapter) in chronological order. The chapters are numbered according to the chronological order of the Quranic chapters provided by al-Azhar University as the officially accepted order of revelation. Each section (*ruku*) is followed by a commentary by one of the well-known commentators.

The Lessons in *Book Year 1* through *Book Year 24*, including *Book Year 5* presented here, are numbered consecutively in order of the revelation of a Quranic chapter. *Book Year 5* is from Muharram 1-Dhu al-Hijja 29, 9 BH, ca. October 22, 613 CE-October 10, 614 CE. It is in this year that the first migration to Abyssinia took place as some of the Prophet's followers who had no tribal protection began to undergo torture and humiliation and Hamza Abd al-Muttalib converted and gave his allegiance to Prophet Muhammad.

Books 25-28 are devoted to the Quranic stories of all other Prophets and Messengers in order of their dates. *Book 25: Adam, Cain and Abel, Enoch (Idris), Noah, Hud and the People of Aad; Saleh and the People of Thamud; Book 26: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Jacob (Israel), Joseph and Job; Book 27: Moses, Aaron, Children of Jacob (Israel), Jethro (Shuayb), Joshua, Khidr and Samuel; Book 28: David, Solomon, Elijah (Ilyas), Elisha (Alyasa), Jonah (Younis), Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl), Ezra (Uzayr), Dhul Qarnayn (Cyrus the Great or Alexander the Great), Luqman, Zechariah, John the Baptist (Yahya), Mary and Jesus.* The last two are: *Book 29: The Life of Prophet Muhammad from Birth to the Revelation* and *Book 30: Teacher's Manual.* The last, *Book 30,* has been prepared for the teacher's Lesson Plans.

At the beginning of each lesson, there is an exercise in critical thinking skills. These consist of one of the following: **The Nine Intellectual Standards, The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** and **The Seven Moral Traits.** The Eight Elements contain thirty-five strategies. However there is no specific order as to how they should be learned and incorporated into our thinking process.

Each lesson is followed by questions for classroom discussion or for dialogue. At the end of each lesson there is an assessment/assignment for students to use while they are developing critical thinking skills as they hopefully learn HOW the Quran teaches critical thinking.

SOURCES

The sources for the history include the works of Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hashim,

Waqidi, Ibn Sad and commentaries by Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn, Tustari and Sayyid Qutb. The sources for the commentaries of Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn and Tustari have been used with the permission of the publisher, the Royal Institute of Ahl al-Bayt in Jordan. They are available on their website www.altafsir.com.

The inclusion of excerpted commentaries (tafsir) by Sayyid Qutb's In the Shade of the Quran (available online) in this Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series is because Sayyid Qutb is considered by some extremist groups as their intellectual source. By including excerpts from his eighteen volume Quranic commentary, extremists cannot disclaim the importance of learning critical thinking as this series is to help young adults learn HOW to think using self-realization (tahqiq) and critical thinking (furqan) skills taught by the Quran. This in order to arm young adults with the ability to choose reason over any irrational extremist ideology that is presented to them.

TERMINOLOGY

All Quranic signs are translations from The Sublime Quran. For the Muslim, the Quran is the Word (Logos) of God. It is this Word of God that has inspired artists, artisans, poets, philosophers and writers, those who had been the exponents of Islamic culture and civilization for almost 1500 years. Yesterday and today's Muslim wants to know more about each Word that God chose for His revelation through the Quran. This realization, in turn, prompted the translation of The Sublime Quran, an attempt to give the sense of unity within the revelation to a non-Arabic speaking reader.

There are several points to note about the terminology used in the translation of the Quranic text and the commentaries.

1. The blessed Prophet did not bring a new religion; he came to confirm what was right in the messages of the previous Prophets. Does this translation speak to the universality of the Quran? The Quran tells the Prophet, the mercy to all of humanity, to speak to people in their own language. Following his example, in addition to the translation being unbounded by time, in several sensitive cases, the word chosen to translate an Arabic word is also of a universal or inclusive rather than a particular or exclusive nature. This adds to the broadening of the perspective and scope of the Quran so that it becomes inclusive rather than exclusive to one particular group of people. In other words, in this way a larger audience can relate to its message.

2. The actual word "Islam" comes from the verb, "to submit" (*aslama*), submission (*sallama*), and ones who submit (*muslimun*). The Quran refers to itself (the Quran) from the very beginning of the revelation (68:35).

3. As previously indicated, the four books (Book 25, Book 26, Book 27 and Book 28) are the stories of the other Prophets and Messengers mentioned in the Quran. While these stories do have lessons to be learned by the Prophet and those who heard the revelations as well as for us today, they do not refer directly to Prophet Muhammad and his prophethood following the beginning

of the revelation. What remains in these books of the Quranic signs in the 24 years of the chronological Quran relate directly to him, what he did and what he was told to say. This allows us to understand his life directly from the Quranic message, the Quranic Sunnah, without any interruption of the stories about previous Prophets and Messengers.

4. Most English translations of the Quran refer to the "Children of Israel." The word "Israel" when used in the Quran refers to Jacob, the patriarch of the children who followed him such as Joseph. Therefore, it should be the "Children of Jacob" as it appears in these texts.

5. The words "*kufr*" and "*kafir*" have been translated here as "ingratitude" and "ungrateful" where the context allows. This is the first meaning of the word and many of us in our lifetime have met Muslims who are "ungrateful." It is the ungrateful Muslims who practice intolerance by declaring anyone who says: Peace be upon you (*as-salam alaykum*) as a non-believer (with what is called *takfir*). In those cases, it would not be suitable to call them "unbelievers" or "infidels," but it is clearly appropriate to refer to them as being "ungrateful" and this would include the early Quraysh, ungrateful for God's revelation and prophethood of Muhammad, who ridiculed the Prophet and fought against the Quranic message of love, forgiveness and peace.

6. Yet another example of the use of inclusive language in an attempt to speak to people in their own language, is the use of God instead of Allah. Many English speaking Muslims, as well as many of the English translations of the Quran to date, use Allah when speaking English instead of God. The intention on the part of the speaker is to maintain a sense of piety. They feel that using Allah in English moves them in that direction. Many even claim that the word Allah cannot be translated.

However well-intentioned a person may be, when speaking English, the use of the word Allah instead of God, first of all, does not follow the Quranic verse that tells the Prophet to speak to people in their own language. Subsequently, it does not follow the Sunnah of the Prophet who did speak to people in their own language.

In addition, it creates a divide between Muslims who use the word and the English speaking people of various faiths to whom they are speaking. In effect, it creates the illusion that there is more than One God—Allah and God. The response of the English speaking person of another faith is to say: I do not understand your religion; you have a different God than I do and you call Him Allah.

It needs to be clearly explained to English speaking Muslims that, unlike what they may feel, they do not have a monopoly on the word Allah. Arabic speaking Christians and Arabic speaking Jews also refer to God as Allah. The Old Testament and New Testament, when translated into Arabic, use Allah for God.

English speaking Muslims, therefore, need to recall the message of the

Quran that God is One (tawhid). In addition, the Prophet did not bring a new religion but confirmed what was correct in the messages of previous Prophets, namely, that God is One. Finally, they need to follow the example of the Prophet, as the Quran says he is the model or example to be followed, by speaking to people in their own language.

7. The Arabic language, much like old English, has the second person singular (masculine: anta (where the verb ends in *ka*). The English equivalent is the subject: "thou" or the object: "thee" or the possessive: "thy." As these are no longer in common usage in English, wherever the original Arabic uses one of these terms, the word "**you**" or "**your**" appear in bold font so that the reader knows the original was the second person singular. When the Quran is speaking directly to the Prophet, it uses the pronoun "thee" or "thou" so it is an important distinction to make.

Using you (second person plural) is done to help English speaking readers, recognizing that using the second person plural pronoun you (masculine: *antum* where the verb ends in masculine: *kum*) for God is to intimate that God is plural, the only sin in the Quran that is unforgivable. By putting the pronoun **you** in bold font indicates the true intention.

8. For the Arabic word "ayah," the English word used in these texts is "sign" rather than the Biblical term, "verse."

9. Several of the signs were abrogated over time. However the indication of a sign being abrogated was done after the complete revelation of the Quran. Whether or not a sign was later abrogated does not change the fact that the first Muslims who listened to the Quran, heard the signs that may have later been said to have been abrogated and that a hafez of the Quran recites all the signs as they appear in the original Arabic revealed to the Prophet. Whatever signs scholars later determined to be abrogated are still part of the Quran and, therefore, are not relevant to learning to be a Quranic critical thinker, learning HOW to think.

10. The first number that appears when the Quranic Chapters begin refers to the chapter number in the chronological order of the revelation so that Quranic Chapter 110 which was the last to be revealed is number 114 in the chronological order.

11. It is to be noted that whenever the name of Muhammad, Prophet Muhammad or the Prophet are used, one may say a silent prayer of blessings for him.

CRITICAL THINKING• COMPONENT

Quranic critical thinking (furqan, discernment) is a process that analyzes how we think. It is a 3-step process: **I**: Quranic critical thinkers apply the **Nine Intellectual Standards** (logic, being definitive, connected, appropriate, have worthiness, include numerous viewpoints, have right judgment, clarity, being fair and just) to: **II**: **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** (point of view, purpose, questions, information, inferences, concepts, assumptions, implications): in order to develop: **III**: **The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** (belief

in One God (tawhid), God-consciousness (taqwa), virtuous conduct (birr) or integrity through moral discipline, empowering constancy ('azm) and courage, persevering in goodness (sabara), love (hubb) or empathic altruism (ihsan) and being fair and just (rashad). The signs (ayat) in each section (ruku) teach any or every one of the **Nine Intellectual Standards** or any and every one of the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or any or every one of the **Seven Quranic Moral Traits.**

This is the key to critical thinking. We do not learn "what" to think, but, rather, "how" to think. Using the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** as an example, critical thinking can be summarized in the following sentence: Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** and consequences. We use **concepts,** ideas and theories to **interpret information** (data, facts and experiences) in order to **answer questions,** solve problems, and resolve issues.

The point of view in all cases is that of the Quranic message and the various individuals and groups that it addresses as this series is a course in Quranic Studies as well as a course in the chronological history of the life of the blessed Prophet (sira). Each student is encouraged to come up with his or her own questions and responses to those questions in order to learn how to become the Quranic critical thinker as the Quranic teaches us HOW to think.

It is important to note that there is no correct or incorrect answer. The important point is to go through the process with as many of the sections as one is able to do. Little by little, this will help each student or reader to develop into critical thinkers or "discerners" of the Quranic message creating a bond between them and the Quranic message.

Once we learn to analyze signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. It is important to note that the order of **The Nine Intellectual Standards** or **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or **The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** is not important. With the grace of God, once all are present, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behaviors.

THE NINE INTELLECTUAL STANDARDS

1. LOGIC (REASONABLE: 'AQALA, 'AQL)
2. DEFINITIVENESS (TO BE PRECISE: MUHKAMA)
3. CONNECTEDNESS (CONTAINING COMPLEXITIES AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS: (MUQTARIN)
4. APPROPRIATENESS (TO MAKE RELEVANT: SADID)
5. WORTHINESS (FOCUSING ON THE IMPORTANT, NOT TRIVIAL, TO BE SIGNIFICANT: AHL)

6. NUMEROUS OR MULTIPLE VIEWPOINTS: 'DHARA'A)
7. RIGHT JUDGMENT (RUSHD)
8. CLARITY (UNDERSTANDABLE, TO BE CLEAR: TABAYYANA)
9. BEING FAIR AND JUST ('AQL, RIGHT-MINDED (RASHAD))

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES

1. EMBODYING A POINT OF VIEW, FRAME OF REFERENCE, PERSPECTIVE (RECOLLECT, BEAR IN MIND, TAKE FOR GRANTED: TADHAKKUR)
   - THINKING INDEPENDENTLY
   - DEVELOPING INSIGHT INTO EGO-CENTRICITY OR SOCIO-CENTRICITY
   - EXPLORING THOUGHTS UNDERLYING FEELINGS AND FEELINGS UNDERLYING THOUGHTS
   - DEVELOPING INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY
2. GENERATING A PURPOSE, AIM, GOAL, OBJECTIVE: (CONSIDER: RA'A)
   - CLARIFYING ISSUES OR CONCLUSIONS
   - CLARIFYING AND ANALYZING THE MEANINGS OF WORDS OR PHRASES
   - READING CRITICALLY: CLARIFYING OR DISCERNING THE SACRED TEXT
   - LISTENING CRITICALLY: THE ART OF SILENT DIALOGUE
3. RAISING QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, ISSUES: (REFLECT: TAFAKKARA)
   - PRACTICING DISCUSSION: CLARIFYING AND QUESTIONING INTERPRETATIONS
   - REASONING DIALOGICALLY: COMPARING INTERPRETATIONS
   - REASONING DIALECTICALLY: EVALUATING INTERPRETATIONS KNOWLEDGE, WISDOM
   - DEEP QUESTIONING
4. USING INFORMATION, DATA, FACTS, OBSERVATIONS, EXPERIENCES, REASONED JUDGMENTS (EVIDENCE: BASIRAH)
   - DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION: CLARIFYING VALUES AND STANDARDS
   - ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ACTIONS
   - DISTINGUISHING RELEVANT FROM IRRELEVANT INFORMATION
   - GIVING REASONS AND EVALUATING EVIDENCE
5. MAKING INTERPRETATIONS, INFERENCES, CONCLUSION, SOLUTIONS (UNDERSTANDING: TABASSUR)
   - ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ARGUMENTS AND INTERPRETATIONS
   - MAKING PLAUSIBLE INFERENCES OR INTERPRETATIONS
   - RECOGNIZING CONTRADICTIONS
   - NOTING SIGNIFICANT SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES
6. UTILIZING CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS, PRINCIPLES, MODELS AND VOCABULARY (RECALL: IDHDHAKARA)
   - COMPARING ANALOGOUS SITUATIONS: REFRAMING INSIGHTS TO NEW CONTEXTS
   - DEVELOPING ONE'S PERSPECTIVE: CREATING OR EXPLORING

ARGUMENTS
MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS
COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE
THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING

7. MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PREPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED (OPINIONS: ZUNUN)
8. GENERATING IMPLICATIONS, CONSEQUENCES (PONDER, EVALUATE: TADABBUR)
GENERATING OR ASSESSING SOLUTIONS
EXPLORING IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES IN DETAIL

1. Embodying a **Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective** (Recollect, Bear in Mind, Take to Heart (*tadhakkur*)):Whenever we think, we think within a point of view. What is the Quranic point of view in these signs? Does the Quran follow universal intellectual values of clarity, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, logic, fairness?

2. Generating a **Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective** (Consider (*ra'a*)): My purpose in addressing the Quranic purpose in these signs is . . .? Know exactly what you are after. Make sure you are not operating with a hidden agenda and that your announced and real purposes are the same. Whenever we think, we think for a purpose. What is the Quran's fundamental purpose in revealing these signs? Are there multiple points of view?

3. Raising **Questions, Problems, Issues** (Reflect (*tafakkara*)): What is the key question I am trying to answer. State the question as clearly and precisely as you can. Details are very important.

4. Using **Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments** (Evidence (*basirah*)): Actively seek the information most relevant to the question. Include in that information options for action, both short-term and long-term. We use experiences, facts and data that the Quran gives us. What information does the Quran give in these signs? What information do I need to answer my question?

5. Making **Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusions, Solutions** (Understanding (*tabassur*)): After reasoning (discerning) the above points, decide what the best answer (conclusion) to the question is. What inferences, judgments or conclusions do these signs make? What are my most fundamental inferences or conclusions based on these Quranic signs?

6. Utilizing **Concepts, Theories, Definitions, Axioms, Laws, Principles, Models, Vocabulary** (Recall (*idhdhakara*)): The most im-

portant concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are ... ? Figure out all significant ideas needed to understand and answer your question. You may need to analyze these concepts. Use a good dictionary. Inferences or conclusions are based on Quranic concepts and theories. What is the most basic concept in my question? What Quranic terms have I learned?

7. Making **Assumptions, Presuppositions, Taking for Granted** (Opinions (*zunun*)): Some important assumptions I am using in my thinking are ... ? Figure out what you are taking for granted. Watch out for self-serving or unjustified assumptions. The Quranic point of view is based on some assumptions. What assumptions is the Quran using in its reasoning? What assumptions am I using in my reasoning from the Quranic revelation?

8. Generating **Implications, Consequences** (Ponder (*tadabbur*)): Evaluate options. Take into account the advantages and disadvantages of possible decisions before acting? What consequences are likely to follow from this or that decision? The Quranic assumptions and my assumptions lead to implications and consequences. What are the implications of the Quranic reasoning? What are the implications of my reasoning? Am I correct in understanding the Quranic implications?

THE SEVEN QURANIC MORAL TRAITS

1. BELIEF IN ONE GOD (TAWHID)
2. GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (TAQWA)
3. VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE (MORALLY OBLIGATED: QANATA, GOODNESS, BIRR)
4. EMPOWERING CONSTANCY, COURAGE (AZM)
5. PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS (STEADFAST: SABARA)
6. EMPATHIC ALTRUISM (LOVE, MERCY, COMPASSION: HUBB)
7. FAIRNESS (NOT SELF-SERVING OR EGO-CENTRIC: 'AQSATA)

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Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

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Whereas Drs. Paul and Elder may not have used their work in religious educational settings, due to the separation of church and state in the educating of American students, learning from their works it became clear that their teachings can help Muslim students, as well, if their method is presented through the content of the Quran. If Muslim students come to understand that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking, that is, discernment (furqan), HOW to think, they will be armed with the intellectual skills they need to confront Islamic extremism.

One of the main scholars that Islamic extremists use in their propaganda is Seyyed Qutb. In order to further arm Muslim students for any confrontation they may have with Islamic extremists who would quote that their ideas come from Seyyed Qutb, I have used his Quranic commentary, In the Shade of the Quran, in Chapter I of this work. Students will learn how, contrary to what they may be told or taught, in many cases, Seyyed Qutb's commentary (indicated by °) speaks of and describes the way that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking and Islamic extremists cannot say that I have left out their scholars.

Last, but certainly not least, I wish to thank Kazi Publications and its founder, Liaquat Ali, for his constant support and encouragement to forge new areas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqli*) will be passed to young students as they learn of a Muslim world deeply entrenched in Islamic narrative sciences (*al-naqli*).

INTRODUCTION
READING THE SIGNS: A QURANIC PERSPECTIVE ON THINKING
BY MOHAMMAD HASHIM KAMALI

The Islamic notion of *aql* (intellect) embraces the faith dimension of knowledge that is also informed by ethical values. The prevailing reading of the Quran on rationality consists of a coalition of faith and reason which is also cognizant of the metaphysical aspect of reality and the limits, therefore, of human reason. This may be said to be a dividing line between the Islamic and Western conceptions of rationality, especially in its post-Enlightenment context.

Thus, it is not accurate to draw a direct parallel between them, as was the case in the Islamic discourse of the colonial period wherein many Muslim writers greatly admired the Western conception of rationality. The twentieth century Islamic discourse has shown awareness of that difference as it began to comprehend the subtleties inherent in the Western lexicon on rationality and its cultural overtones.[1]

THE DIVINE SIGNS (*AYAT*)

The Quran teaches an essential doctrine of the *ayat* (God's signs in the universe) functioning as pointers to the providential purpose at all levels of creation. Thus the Quran makes frequent references such as 'signs for a people who understand—exercise their intellect'. This evidential role of the divine signs entails an accompanying demand placed upon humans to engage in a rational understanding of the signs and draw conclusions on the discovery of truth and correct guidance.

The human reception of the signs, thus, depends ultimately upon the integrity of reason, without which humans would be incapable neither of comprehending the signs nor of responding to their message. The more abundant is an individual's native endowment of reason, the greater is the possibility for him or her to attain a larger magnitude of understanding and a higher level of response.

The nexus between faith and reason thus constitutes the hallmark of intelligent Islamic spirituality, wherein human intellect and emotions are guided toward harmony with one another. The Quran repeatedly provokes its reciters to think about the signs of God in the universe and within themselves, to understand God's illustrious presence in them, and ultimately to vindicate the truth. The word *ayah* and its plural *ayat* occur in the Quran over 400 times, although the whole of the Quran introduces itself as a collection of *ayat*. To quote the Quran: *We will cause them to see Our signs on the horizons and*

within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is The Truth. (41:53) And, *On the earth are signs, for the ones that are certain and in yourselves. Will you not, then, perceive?* (51:20-51:21)

God reveals the truth in a variety of ways, some explicit and others by allusion, the latter mainly through the modality of the signs, in order to provoke and engage the human intellect. The signs of God cannot be readjust off the face of the signs but require thinking and reflection. This is indicated in the phrase: *We will cause them to see Our signs* ... which suggests that the signs may not be instantaneously visible to the naked eye. The whole concept of signs seeks to forge a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* (38:29) A sign is also a portent and allusion to something other than itself and should not therefore be seen as the final message and purpose of the revelation containing it.

Approximately 750 verses, or nearly one-eighth of the Quran, exhort the readers to study nature, history, the Quran itself, and humanity at large. The text of the Quran employs a range of expressions in its appeal to those who listen (*yasma'un*), those who think (*yatafakkarun*), those who reflect (*yatadabbarun*), those who observe (*yanzurun*), those who exercise their intellect (*ya'qilun*), those who take heed and remember (*yatadhakkarun*), those who ask questions (*yas'alun*), those who develop an insight (*yatafaqqahun*), and those who know (*ya'lamun*).[2]

These and their derivatives (mostly occurring in the active verbal form) consist essentially of open invocations and encouragement to thinking that is not limited by a methodology or framework. *Meditate they not, then, on the Quran* (*afala yatadabbarun al-Qur'an*) (47:24) *Tadabbur* means concentrated and goal-oriented thinking provoked by the challenge to find something new or to solve a difficult problem.

Quranic references to thinking and the exercise of intellect occur in conjunction with basically five major themes: Belief in the Oneness and generosity of God (*tawhid*); reflection on the Quran; the human being and the universe; historical precedent; and thinking itself.

References to *aql* (intellect) and its derivatives occur on 49 occasions in the text. The typical Quranic expression, *ulu'l-albab* (those who possess vision and understanding), and its synonym, *ulu'l-nuha* (people endowed with intellectual abilities) occur 33 times in the text. Such expressions are frequently juxtaposed with the exposition of signs, such as in the sign: *Thus, God makes manifest His signs to you so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (2:242) or in the sign: *Surely, We made manifest the signs to you so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (57:17). Repeated references to pondering over the signs are variously nuanced such that they embrace within their fold the widest spectrum of people who may be endowed with different intellectual abilities and endowments.[3]

Al-Isfahani defines thought (*al-fikr*) as the power of the mind that facilitates access to knowledge (*'ilm*). Thinking (*al-tafakkur*) is the movement of that power which is driven by the intellect (*al-'aql*), and this can only occur when an initial image of the subject is attainable in the mind of the thinker. Thinking cannot, therefore, proceed over something of which no image exists in the mind. This can be said of the self of God, for example, as we have no image on which to focus our thought.[4]

The human being can only think over the attributes of God through the observation of His signs. Broadly speaking, thinking proceeds over the whole of the created universe without any exception; indeed, the Quran repeatedly invites such in respect to both the physical and abstract aspects of reality, both in the present and in regards to bygone history that is only perceived by the intellect rather than sense perception. Often the Quran gives examples, parables, and narratives of other nations, and then follows them with the reminder, usually addressed to the Prophet, to recount the narratives of the past so that the people may think and reflect over them:

And recount to them the tiding of him to whom We gave Our signs. (7:175)

And there are the parables that We propound for humanity so that perhaps they will reflect. (59:21)

Truly, in that are certainly signs for a folk who reflect. (30:21)

A hierarchy of five perceptive-cognitive functions is also suggested, including and extending through hearing, sight, thinking, dhikr remembrance, and certainty.[5]

Given such a scale of intensified perceptive understanding, the Quran propounds the notion of *ulul'l-albab*, the thoughtful individuals who are possessed of proper understanding and response. *'Aql* is thus tied to the cognitive dimension of faith.

Significantly, the very term for reason and intelligence in Arabic, *al-'aql*, has at the core of its basic meaning the practical idea of "restraining" and "binding," that is, of holding one's self back from blameworthy conduct—being an interior self-imposed limit. Quranic commentators understand thinking (*tafakkur, tafkir*) as pondering and reflection, which is a mental activity and process, not an outcome.

Thinking (*tafakkur*) is considered as a form of worship of God if it is done with sincerity and good purpose. *'Aql* in its Quranic conception is also one that conceives the truth, and it is always in search of it. This conception of *'aql* precludes one that is rigid, arrogant, and misleading. Some have also drawn the conclusion from the ubiquitous Quranic emphasis on thinking that all Muslims must strive to be thinking individuals.[6]

Al-Qaradawi has quoted Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's (d. 751/1350) own observation as well as some epithetic statements, the latter narrated from other leading figures to the effect that "thinking for an hour is better than worship of many years," and another statement that "thinking for an hour is superior

to a whole night of prayer." To this Ibn Qayyim added that "thinking is the act of the heart whereas worship is the act of one's limbs, and the former is superior to the latter."

The pious caliph Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz (d. 101/718) is similarly quoted: Thinking over the bounties of God is the best form of worship. Abbas Mahmud al-Agqad went so far as to say that: Thinking—*al-tafkir*—is an Islamic obligation. Just as God Most High ordered us to worship Him by performing prayer and fasting, He also ordered us to think in numerous verses and in so many different ways, all of which vindicate thinking as one of the cardinal messages of the Quran.[7]

The Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge espoused with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression *al-tafaqquh fi'l-din*, that is, understands the religion, signifying a rational and inquisitive approach to constructing a Quranic worldview.

Islam, in other words, advises analytical knowledge and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely dogmatic approach. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions: Faith based on detailed analysis (*al-iman al-tafsili*) as opposed to undigested and uncomprehended faith (*al-iman al-ijmali*). The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the religious scholars of all the leading schools of thought. Thus it is declared in a sign: *But a section of people only that they become learned in the way of life and that they warn their folk.* (9:122).

We also note the distinction between thought-based knowledge and transmitted or received knowledge reflected in the twin juristic and hadith-related expressions of knowledge based on understanding (*'ilm al-diraya*), and report-based and transmitted knowledge (*'ilm al-riwaya*). The former is based on understanding and insight (*diraya wa tafaqquh*) and takes priority over the latter. Whereas *'ilm al-riwaya* relies mainly on memory and retention, *'ilm al-diraya* is based on cognition, understanding, and analysis.

Thus, if there are hadith reports, or any factual reports for that matter, which do not stand to reason and understanding, they would be most likely discounted and abandoned, with the exception only of devotional matters (*'ibadat*) which are based on faith and submission more than on rational analysis.

Another feature of the Quranic vision of thinking is indicated in its emphasis on wisdom and good judgment (*hikmah*) which signifies the quality of thinking, its regard for values, and its outcome. Wisdom and good judgment can easily be said to be more important than technical know-how and expertise, as it can guide expert knowledge as to its proper application and the attainment of excellence.

The Quran mentions *hikmah* twenty times, and in about ten of these it is immediately preceded by the word Book or *kitab*, which is a reference to divine scripture—primarily the Quran, but also other divinely revealed scriptures. The text, thus, says with reference to Jesus: *And He teaches him the Book and wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel.* (3:48) The juxtaposition of *kitab* and *hikmah* is often contextualized by a reference to the sending of prophets who teach the people and guide them with scripture and wisdom (e.g., *wa yu'allimuhum al-kitaba wa'l-hikmata*) as it is said of the Prophet Muhammad: *And teaches you the Book and wisdom* (2:159) and: *Teaches them the Book and wisdom* (62:2 ff); the descendants of Prophet Abraham: *We gave the people of Abraham the Book and wisdom* (4:54); and of Luqman: *We gave Luqman wisdom* (31:12). The holistic, superior, and indivisible value of *hikmah* in the Quran is underscored in one of its signs to the effect that when God bestows wisdom on someone that person is indeed granted an immense source of goodness: *And whomever is given wisdom, then, surely, was given much good and none recollects no doubt but those imbued with intuition.* (2:269).

To mention *hikmah* together with the Book evidently means that the Quran should be read with wisdom and divorcing the one from the other by taking a totally dogmatic approach to the Quran goes against the divine purpose and intention of its revelation. To read the Quran in the light of *hikmah* thus means a comprehensive reading that reaches beyond the obvious meaning of its words to encapsulate the goal and purpose of its message and then also reflection on the ways and means of how its benefits can be realized for the individual and society.[8]

The repeated juxtaposition of the "Book and *Hikmah*" in the Quran led some commentators, such as the Successor, Qatadah ibn Diama al-Sadusi (d.118 H), Ibn Wahhab, the disciple of Imam Malik (d. 179/795), and the Imam al-Shafii (d. 205/820) himself to the somewhat unusual observation that "*hikmah*" is a reference to the Sunna of the Prophet. Many have taken and followed this view; but since the text does not specify such a meaning for *hikmah*, the word should convey its natural and unqualified meaning as I have depicted in this presentation.

Good judgment, insight, balance and avoidance of extremes, the ability to distinguish between truth and falsehood, and procedural accuracy are commonly associated with *hikmah* and *hikmah* as such becomes a dimension of evaluative thinking in. its Quranic idiom. Besides, when the Quran declares that God Most High endowed the Prophets David and Solomon and also the renowned sage Luqman with *hikmah*, it could not have referred to the Sunna of the Prophet Muhammad, as Sunna as such did not exist in those times.

The Quranic usage of *hikmah* reinforces the holistic quality of thinking. *Hikmah* also seeks to forge a close tie between reason and emotion (*'aql wa qalb*) thereby encouraging what is now known as emotional intelligence. This

is how the Quran and also the Sunna often deliver their messages, for, unlike the modern statutory laws and texts, the Quranic guidance, commands, and prohibitions are often espoused with appeals to the heart and mind of their readers.[9]

Al-Isfahani defined *hikmah* as the realization of the truth through knowledge and intellect and it is manifested in the performance of benevolent deeds.[10] According to another definition: Wisdom signifies comprehension of the truth and reality and the ability to avoid corruption in one's quest to attain perfection."[11]

Random House Dictionary of the English Language similarly defines wisdom as: Knowledge of what is true or right coupled with just judgment as to action. Wisdom is thinking informed by the light of the heart that often leads to action and contemplates its consequences in relationship with other relevant factors. This may strike a note with the renowned hadith in which it is declared that: Fearing God is the pinnacle of wisdom (*ra's al-hikmati makhafat Allah*)."[12]

It is presumably for this reason that the great religions of the world have urged the seekers of knowledge to combine it with wisdom. It is wisdom that confers a higher quality on thinking and helps knowledge to be used for the promotion of good giving it meaning and direction.

In an effort to train the individual to enhance his or her quality of thinking, al-Ghazali (d. 505/1111) discusses the two sources of knowledge that Muslim tradition has recognized. One of these is through human teaching and learning (*al-ta'allum al-insani*) and the other through divine teaching (*al-ta'lim al-rabbani*).

The former is externally transmitted from teacher to student, whereas the latter is conveyed by the Universal Intellect which is superior, more intense, and more effective than human teaching. This knowledge is internally acquired either through revelation (*wahy*), which is a prerogative of the Prophets, or it is acquired through meditation, thinking, and reflection.

Al-Ghazali subscribes to the view that the essence of all knowledge is centered in the inner self of the human person in much the same way as growth potential that is vested in the soil and seed, and it is through teaching that the individual's potential is developed.[13] These two aspects of knowledge, that is, the external and the internal, are complementary to one another. This is because no one can possibly teach or learn from any teacher all the sciences, some of which are learned through teaching but the rest inferred by the reflective thought of the individual. It is therefore important that the avenues of learning remain open both through teaching and through inner reflection, thinking, and illumination. This is another way of saying that all knowledge is acquired and developed through the senses, inner reflection and thinking, both of which partake in natural endowment and development through external transmission and teaching.

Al-Ghazali's views on the internal and external sources of knowledge tended to correspond with those of Ibn Sina (d. 428/1037), but which differed, at least partially, from those of the second/ninth century Ikhwan al-Safa (c. 373/983). All knowledge, according to the latter, is acquired through the senses and none inheres in human nature. Knowledge that is developed through thought and reflection also originate in the senses. The same analysis is extended to the axiomatic knowledge of postulates that are derived and confirmed through the senses. In support of this theory Ikhwan al-Safa have cited the Quranic verse: *And God brought you out from the wombs of your mothers and you know nothing.* (16:78). All knowledge is therefore acquired knowledge, a view which may strike a closer note with some of the modern theories on the subject.[14]

Muslim thought in the middle ages did not admit the ontological distinction between tangible entities that could be sensuously apprehended and entities of a spiritual or subliminal nature. This may be said to be a more sound and realistic view of reality than is allowed for by the modern positivist doctrines of science. Being is manifested at various levels and in several forms, none of which is less real than the other. Arabic thought employed the notions systematized in Stoic theory that divide being into three locations: Verbal utterance, psychic representation, and reality—without this last in any sense having exclusive title to Being.

Al-Farabi (d. 950 CE) took up this view and assimilated psychic representation to the entities of reason. Others rehearsed this division with the addition of a fourth location, that of Scripture. Reality thus had a four-fold manifestation, depending on whether the subject existed immediately in itself or whether its like was graven in the mind (*dhihn*, psyche) composed of sounds, which together indicates the psychic representation, or was manifested in characters standing for sound and speech. All four have a basic characteristic in common which is existence (*wujud, haqiqah*).[15]

The Islamic and Western perceptions of creative and evaluative thinking both recognize this to be a skill that is developed through training and controlled exercise. It is through training and thinking that we adopt new patterns of perceiving reality that we are able to see differently and creatively. It is generally acceded that creative thinking and critical thinking go hand-in-hand and complement one another. Critical thinking means "involving or exercising skilled judgment or observation." Thinking is critical when it evaluates the reasoning behind a decision. Such evaluation must, however, be carried forth in a constructive manner.[16]

The purpose of critical thinking is to achieve understanding, evaluate viewpoints, and solve problems. In general, one's thinking is likely to become critical when concrete learning experiences precede abstract thought.[17] This strikes a parallel note, in its Islamic idiom, with thinking that is espoused with *hikmah*.

The famous yet controverted hadith: The first (being) God created is the intelligence (*awwalu ma khalaqa Allahu al-'aqla*), sparked prolonged discussions among Muslim thinkers over many centuries over the implications of this statement. Among the issues debated was the priority of reason over revelation and the respective role of each in their mutual inter-dependence.

Another issue was whether the disparity among humans in respect of reason also affected the modalities of moral obligation. Some prominent thinkers including Abu Bakr al-Razi (d. 313/925) apparently advocated the primacy of reason over the revelation. This would be properly known as "rationalism," which deems the primacy of reason over revelation. This is different from "rationality" which means treating any issue by using reason without giving reason priority.

SOURCES AND INSTRUMENTS OF KNOWLEDGE

Commenting on the Quranic passage quoted earlier, Muhammad Iqbal observed that the Quran regards both self (*anfus*) and world (*afaq*) as sources of knowledge. God reveals His signs in inner as well as outer experience. The Quran thus opens fresh vistas of knowledge in the domain of our inner experience. Mystic experience and intuition, then, however unusual and abnormal, must now be regarded as perfectly natural and open to scrutiny like other aspects of human experience." But inner experience is only one source of human knowledge. The outer experience in the Quran, Iqbal continues on the same page, unfolds two other sources of knowledge—nature and history, and it is in tapping these sources of knowledge that "the spirit of Islam is seen at its best".

The Quran sees the signs of reality in the sun, the moon, the alternation of day and night, the perpetual changes of the winds, the variety of human colors and tongues, and in fact in the whole of nature as revealed to the sense-perception of man. The Muslim's duty is to reflect on these signs and not to pass by them as if he is deaf and blind *They have hearts with which they understand not. And they have eyes with which they perceive not. And they have ears with which they hear not. Those are like flocks. Nay! They are ones who go astray. Those, they are the ones who are heedless* (7:179), for he who does not see these signs in this life will remain blind to the realities of the life to come. The divine signs are observed through sense-perception using mainly the faculties of hearing, sight, and intellect: *Journey they not through the earth? Have they not hearts with which to be reasonable or ears with which to hear?* (22:46) The emphasis in this sign is on the faculty of reason and understanding, suggesting that not all of our information about nature comes directly from sensation, for if that were the case we would be no different from animals.

Frequent references to sense-perception as the principal mode of receiving the signs show the scientific/experimental import of the Quran. The Quran

goes even further to suggest sense perception as the only avenue of knowledge, as the text already reviewed provides: *And God brought you out from the wombs of your mothers and you know nothing. And He assigned to you the ability to hear and sight and mind so that perhaps you will give thanks.* (16:78) Knowledge of the signs is therefore acquired through the use of these faculties. In another sign, the Quran praises those who listen to the word and follow the best of it: *Those who listen to the saying of the Quran and follow the fairer of it. Those are those whom God guided. And those, they are imbued with intuition.* (or make the best possible interpretation thereof) (39:18). This sign apparently subjects the data of sense-perception to the exercise of intellectual selection. The text also teaches that sense-perception does not perceive all reality: *So I swear an oath by what you perceive and what you perceive not.* (69:37-69:38). Certainty (*yaqin*) may also be beyond the reach of human intellect, as the human mind may be blurred by the variables of time and space. What is deemed certain today may be uncertain tomorrow.

We also note that according to the teachings of the Quran, the universe is dynamic in its origin, finite, and capable of increase. Early Muslim thinkers do not seem to have grasped the Quranic emphasis on inductive reasoning and experimentation. It was indeed a slow realization for Muslim thinkers to note "that the spirit of the Quran was essentially anti-classical". Putting full confidence in Greek reasoning, Muslim thinkers tried to understand the Quran in the light of Greek philosophy, which in the beginning of their careers they had studied with so much enthusiasm.

The substance of Iqbal's analysis on this subject is also upheld by Malik bin Nabi (1905-1973), who understands the creative impulse of the Quran as the motivating force behind the efflorescence of science at a time when Muslim thinkers began to grasp the full impact of the Quran on experimentation and inductive reasoning.[18]

The dynamic conception of the universe in the Quran is also seen by its conception of life as an evolutionary movement in time. History thus constitutes the third source of knowledge in the Quran. It is one of the most essential teachings of the Quran, as Iqbal has further observed, that nations are collectively judged, and suffer for their misdeeds here and now. The Quran thus constantly cites historical instances, and urges upon the reader to reflect on the past and present experiences of humanity: *Customs passed away before you. So journey through the earth; then, look on how had been the Ultimate End of the ones who deny.* (3:137)

If a wound afflicts you, surely, a wound afflicted the folk similar to that. And these are the days We rotate among humanity so that God knows those who believed and takes witnesses to Himself from among you. (3:140)

And: *And of whom We created there is a community that guides with The Truth, and with it, it is just. And those who denied Our signs, We will draw them on gradually from where they will not know.* (7:181-183)

The Quran's interest in history as a source of human knowledge extends farther than mere indication of historical generalizations. "It has given us one of the most fundamental principles of historical criticism."[19] Since accuracy in recording facts is an indispensable condition of history as a science, accuracy depends ultimately on those who report them. The reporter's personal character is thus an important factor in judging his testimony. The Quran says *O those who believed! If one who disobeys drew near to you with a tiding, then, be clear so that you not light on a folk out of ignorance.* (49:6). It is the application of the principle embodied in this sign to the reporters of the Prophet's traditions out of which were gradually evolved the canons of historical criticism.

A scientific treatment of history, however, requires a wider experience, a greater maturity of practical reason, and a fuller realization of certain basic ideas regarding the nature of life and time. These are in the main three, and taken together they constitute the foundation of Quranic teaching.

(1) The unity of human origin: The Quran states: *He creates you from one soul.* (39:6) And: *O humanity! Be God-conscious of your Lord Who created you from a single soul.* (4:1). But the perception of life as an organic unity is a slow achievement. Islam sowed the germ of this aspiration and it became a Quranic assignment of us to work towards its realization. Notwithstanding the fact that Christianity, long before Islam, brought the message of equality to humanity, the Roman Empire had no more than a general and abstract conception of human unity.

On the other hand, the growth of territorial nationalism in Europe has tended to stifle the broad human element in the art and literature of Europe. European colonialism was also inspired by a self-image of superiority. Europe assumed a superior image that non-European peoples could be freely dominated, exploited, and subjugated.[20] It was quite otherwise with Islam. The impulse of Islam was from the outset to make the idea of human unity a living factor in the Muslim experience that was to be taken towards fuller fruition.

(2) A keen sense of the reality of time, and the concept of life as a continuous movement in time: The Quranic view of the alternation of day and night as a sign of the ultimate Reality which appears in a fresh glory every moment and the tendency in Muslim metaphysics to regard time as objective—all this constituted the intellectual heritage and ideals of Islam.

(3) The merger between religious and secular values: This is a unique feature of Islamic thought which is distinguished by its attempt to bring harmony between them, probably for the first time in history. It was in the state of Madinah that we encounter a clear example where universally proclaimed moral values formed the criteria of political judgment. Political leaders and statesmen were expected to recognize not only the value of efficiency, but also of justice, human dignity, equality, and freedom. In his renowned *Philosophy of History*, Hegel (1770-1831) recognized that the unity between the

secular and the spiritual took place in Islamic society and civilization long before it made any impact in the modern West: We must therefore regard (the reconciliation between the secular and spiritual) as commencing rather in the enormous contrast between the spiritual religious principles, and the barbarian Real World. For spirit as the consciousness of an inner world is, at the commencement, itself still in the abstract form. All that is secular is consequently given over to rudeness and capricious violence. The (Muslim) principle, the enlightenment of the oriental world, is the first to contravene this barbarism and caprice. We find it developing itself later and more rapidly than Christianity; for the latter needed eight centuries to grow into a political form.[21]

The modern West followed the example of the historical Islamic world in demanding that holders of political power operate under a set of moral rules. But as the modern West harmonized the secular and religious only nationally, the international realm was free to operate under the dynamics of power politics and secular rudeness. This failure was a cause of the senseless violence that claimed over 100 million war victims in the twentieth century. Recognition of the danger of the purely secular politics led to the creation of the United Nations, yet even this effort was undermined by political realists who enjoyed a disproportionate sway among the political pundits of Europe and America.

Safi has rightly noted the irony that contemporary Muslim societies have unfortunately followed a similar course in decoupling the secular and the religious and now find themselves entangled in a crisis of legitimacy. Many Muslim regimes are driven by the logic of power and operate outside the realm of moral correctness. It is alarming to see that this decoupling has impacted the religiously inspired movements, which seem to succumb to the logic of power in their readiness to employ amoral--even immoral--strategies in their fight against political corruption and oppression.[22]

OBSTACLES TO CORRECT REASONING

The Quranic emphasis on pondering over the signs is also underscored by a set of guidelines to ensure a correct outcome of reflection and thinking over them. The text thus draws attention to a series of exclusions and factors that stand in the way of the proper functioning of intellect:

(1) Pursuit of caprice (*hawa*) which may consist of love, hatred, pomposity and prejudice that confound impartiality and sound judgment: *Had you considered he who took to himself his own desire as his god and whom God caused to go astray out of a knowledge, sealed over his having the ability to hear and his heart and laid a blindfold on his sight? Who, then, will guide him after God? Will you not, then, recollect?* (45:23)

And if you had followed their desires after what drew near you of the knowledge, there is not for you from God either a protector or a helper. (2:120)

But if they respond not to you, then, know that they only follow their own desires. (28:50)

And: *And obey not him whose heart We made neglectful of Our Remembrance and who followed his own desires and whose affair had been excess.* (18:28)

The choice is between two alternatives: caprice (*hawa*) and guidance (*huda*); the former evidently renders obscure one's attempt to attain the latter.

(2) Pursuit of conjecture in the face of certitude: And surely conjecture (*al-zann*) avails nothing against the truth (*al-Haqq*). *And most of them follow nothing but opinion. Truly, opinion avails them not against The Truth at all.* (10:36)

And follow up not of what there is not for you knowledge of it. Truly, having the ability to hear and sight and mind, each of those will have been that which is asked. (17:36) Knowledge and truth stand in contradistinction with the pursuit of conjecture. Note that the text says one should not follow conjecture until it is established and elevated to the rank of knowledge. It does not say that one should avoid conjecture altogether. In another place, conjecture occurs side by side with *hawa* or that which they themselves desire: *They follow nothing but opinion and that for which their souls yearn.* (53:23) This is the kind of conjecture or opinion that is meant.

Knowledge is established by sense-perception that often begins with a measure of speculation and doubt but which is affirmed by the light of reason and conviction. Some commentators maintain that the main context for this guideline is religion: Thus it is said that one should not take speculative positions in matters of belief. As for scientific enquiry and pursuit of knowledge, conjecture is neither discouraged nor avoidable.[23]

The ultimate purpose of this engagement is to attain the truth. Once the truth is attained, one should then commit oneself to it and observe it: *And what else is there after The Truth but wandering astray. Where, then, turn you away?* (10:32)

Completed was the Word of your Lord in sincerity and justice. There is no one who changes His Words. (54) (6:115).

(3) Blind imitation of others: The correct exercise of reason in Islam is tied to personal conviction as opposed to indiscriminate following of others, hallowed custom, and precedent. These must be judged in the light of reason and abandoned if found deviant and misleading: The misguided will say, as the Quran provides: *Nay! We will follow whatever we discovered our fathers were following on it —even though their fathers had been not at all reasonable—nor are they truly guided.* (2:170)

And: *Enough is what we found our fathers upon. Even though their fathers had been knowing nothing nor are they truly guided?* (5:104)

This was the response that Prophet Abraham and other great prophets received from their detractors, but the text address them again and again that both you and your ancestors were clearly misguided. *Certainly, We gave Abraham his right judgment before. And We had been ones who know of him when he said to his father and his folk: What are these images to which you be ones*

who give yourselves up to? They said: We found our fathers as ones who are worshippers of them. He said: Certainly, you and your fathers had been in a clear wandering astray.(21:51-21:54)

Forsake those who took to themselves their way of life as a pastime and as a diversion and whom this present life deluded. (6:70)

*Is it that **your** formal prayer commands **you** that we leave what our fathers worship?* (11:87)

As we shall presently elaborate, indiscriminate imitation of others is widely held to be the single most damaging cause of the decline of creative thinking among Muslims.

(4) Oppressive Dictatorship: The Quran takes to task arrogant dictators and those who support them and follow them. Hence the plea of those who say: *Our Lord! Truly, we obeyed our chiefs and our great ones. They caused us to go astray from the way* (33:66) should be of no merit. In a number of other places the text denounces the Pharaoh and Karun for their oppressive ways who misled their people in rejecting the guidance that was conveyed to them. *Pharaoh and his Council but they followed the command of Pharaoh. And the command of Pharaoh was not well-intended.* (11:96)

DECLINE OF CRITICAL THINKING

I shall not retrace well-documented history that Muslim thinkers were pioneers in the creation of new knowledge. It was due to the impact of the Quran that, in contrast to the Greeks who excelled in deductive method of reasoning and logic, Muslim scientists distinguished themselves in inductive and experimental approaches to scientific enquiry. The golden period of Muslim science started around 700 AD and lasted until about 1350 AD. Great thinkers such as Ibn Sina, Jabir ibn Hayyan, Abu Bakr Zakarriya al-Razi, Abu Rayhan al-Biruni, Ibn al-Nafis al-Dimashgi, al-Khawarizmi, and many others have left a rich legacy of contributions to the advancement of sciences in anatomy, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, optics, etc.[24]

After the fourteenth century creative thinking began to decline in the Islamic world due to a variety of factors, including the Mongol invasion and burning of Baghdad, the defeat of the Muslim Arabs in Spain and the continuing crusades, the collapse of the Ottoman caliphate, and the ensuing onslaught of European colonialism. The creative impulse of Islamic thought suffered setbacks as a result. Muslims were also beset with many internal problems including the alienation of philosophers, scientists, and thinkers from the theologians, sectarian controversies, and the prevalence of intellectual conservatism and imitation of past authority (*taqlid*)).

Philosophy and the sciences fell into a rapid decline while more rigid forms of instruction and narrower curricula prevailed. It was argued that orthodoxy was being threatened and that there was a need to restrain thinkers in order to defend religion. The latitude and diversity of discourse that expanded

the scope of religious sciences, theology (*kalam*), commentary (*tafsir*), hadith, and jurisprudence (*fiqh*) gave way to narrower criteria of *kufr*, *bidah*, and *taqlid* and the so-called closing of the door of *ijtihad* (*sadd bab al-ijtihad*).[25]

More recently, a certain abuse of Islamic authority operated by a dogmatic radicalism has exacerbated the decline of creative thought among Muslims. The situation is not helped by the prevalence of passivity in popular culture concerning the dogmatic excesses of these ardent proponents of imitation of past authority (*taqlid*). One of the salient features of this mindset is a certain ignorance of the essential impulse of the Quran on creative thought. Malik bin Nabi put it succinctly that the crisis of a civilization and a society at a critical point of its history "is not the paucity of its material objects but the poverty of its ideas."[26]

WHAT IS *IJTIHAD*?

The Quranic appeal to rational thinking and enquiry is not restrained by the methodology of *ijtihad*. There is, in fact, no clear text on *ijtihad*[27] in the Quran. *Ijtihad* as a concept originates in the hadith of the Prophet and the practice and precedent of companions. The methodology of *ijtihad* which is the basic theme of the science of the sources of law (i.e. *usul al-fiqh*) is itself a product of *ijtihad*. It seems that the Prophet also saw *ijtihad* as a creative impulse rather than engaging in the technicalities of legal reasoning—as the *usul al-fiqh* later developed in abundance. When the Prophet spoke of *ijtihad* or when he approved of its application, he seems to have done so in terms of *ijtihad* qua creative thinking.

One would readily admit that imposing restrictions on thinking, even if it were possible, by cultures and legal traditions could be exaggerated, in which case it would be prone to acquiring negative dimensions. One would not, on the other hand, advocate free thinking that is not limited by some kind of goal-orientation and values. Even the actual process of creative thinking, as earlier noted, is a skill that could be learned and refined by stages to direct it into productive avenues. The liberal tradition of the West tends to impose minimal restrictions on thinking whereas Islam tends to take a more guided approach to creative reasoning. Whereas both the Islamic and Western traditions recognize the authority of reason as a criterion of judgment, the liberal tradition has, unlike Islam, isolated spirituality and faith from the ambit of scientific rationality.

However, the methodology of *ijtihad* was also influenced in the course of time by a variety of factors, including the political climate, the change of caliphate (*khilafah*) to monarchy (*mulk*), Hellenistic thought in relationship to analogy (*qiyas*) and its syllogistic components, and the rift between the religious scholars and ruling authorities.[28]

Usul al-fiqh and its proposed methodology followed a difficult course and became embroiled in technicality that had adverse consequences for *ijti-*

had. What is needed now is to recapture the purity of this vital concept, to make *ijtihad* as our principal instrument for originality and healthy adjustment, but also to revise and reform some aspects of the theory of *ijtihad* itself that are no longer responsive to the prevailing conditions and challenges of our time.

I have elsewhere discussed the theory of *ijtihad* and its related issues and space here does not permit engagement in detail.[29] Yet I conclude this section by suggesting, however briefly, that the conventional theory of *ijtihad* needs to be revised and reformed in respect of the need:

1) to recognize the validity of collective and consultative *ijtihad* (*ijtihad jama'i*) side by side with that of *ijtihad* by individual scholars;

2) to allow experts in other fields such as science, economics, and medicine to carry out *ijtihad* in their respective fields if they are equipped with adequate knowledge of the source evidence of Islam. They may alternatively sit together with, or seek advice from, those learned in *Shariah.*

Ijtihad has in the past been often used as an instrument of diversity and disagreement rather than of unity and consensus. Although disagreement must admittedly be allowed in principle, yet there is a greater need today for unity and consensus. Scholars and learned bodies should not perhaps encourage excessive engagement in diversity of schools and sects but try to find ways that would help to close the gap between them and encourage unity on principles. This may require policy guidelines for different settings and countries, and, if so, that should be reflected in our approaches to *ijtihad.* Certain guidelines may also be provided by thinkers and leaders to stimulate consensus-oriented *ijtihad* within the ranks of the judiciary and legislative assemblies.

Ijtihad has in the past been conceived basically as a legal concept and methodology. Our understanding of the source evidence on *ijtihad* does not specify such a framework for *ijtihad.* Rather, we think of the original conception of *ijtihad* as a problem-solving formula for the problems encountered by individual Muslims and the Muslim community. This would confirm our view of the need to broaden the scope of *ijtihad* to other disciplines beyond the framework of *fiqh* and *usul al-fiqh.*

According to a legal maxim of Islamic jurisprudence, there should be no *ijtihad* in the presence of a clear text of the Quran and Hadith (*la ijtihad ma'al-nass*). This maxim should also be revised. This is because of the possibility that the text in question could now be seen in a different light and given a fresh interpretation in a different context. What we are saying is that the legal text may need to be understood first and that by itself may involve *ijtihad.* Hence *ijtihad* may not be precluded if it could advance a fresh understanding of the text in the first place.

The persistent decline of critical reason among Muslims is due partly to the notion that the exercise of personal judgment and *ijtihad* ceased with the epoch-making works of the legists and imams of the past. Added to this is the

prevailing mindset that a Muslim should follow one or the other of the established schools of thought and abandon his judgment in favor of interpretations of the earlier centuries whose originators could have no conception of the necessities of the twenty-first century Muslims. Until about 1500 CE, independent *ijtihad* allowed Muslims and Muslim societies to continually adapt in the face of changing societal conditions and new advances in knowledge.

Unfortunately, as Muslim civilization began to weaken about four centuries ago in the face of Western advances, Muslims began to adopt a more conservative stance in an attempt to preserve traditional values and institutions. As a result Muslim thinkers became inclined to view innovation and adaptation negatively. For all the rhetoric and symbolic form of the neo-radicals that tend to dominate the audience of Muslims, the spirit of Islam is often palpably missing from their endeavors, while more than ever *ijtihad* is needed where women, education, and politics are concerned.

ISLAM AND THE WEST

Scientific rationality essentially reduces intelligence to the level of neural chemistry where mental and behavioral phenomena are understood merely as manifestations of physical processes. It tends to deprive us of our noblest dimensions (faith, love, beauty), separates the soul from the body, and the sensory from the intelligible. In the realm of economics, we are merely a producer and consumer of goods and is moved solely by our individual self-interest. This too is opposed to the Islamic viewpoint which also sees in us morality and transcendent faith.

This physicalist analysis of intelligence is now increasingly being seen as conceptually inadequate. The real question is whether one may admit a human dimension which is autonomous and irreducible to a physical mass. In Moravia's phrase "can one posit something which exists and yet at the same time is non physical? Do the rejection of the soul and the achievements attained by bio and neurosciences oblige us to hold that man is nothing but body?"[30] Recently these have been attempted by some creative thinkers to reconceptualize intentions of 'reason' and 'intelligence' along anti-materialistic lines drawing on the experience of older non-Western traditions, or even popular folk conceptions.[31]

Islamic philosophy—which mainly studies purposes, as against science which mainly studies causes—sees, in line with the Quranic teaching, the role of objects and events as signs of divine presence and action. Faith is understood by Muslims not as a limitation on science but as its vista for enrichment and perfection.[32]

The variant perspectives of Western philosophy and science are also behind the Western puzzlement why Muslims have not become more secularized. This unwarranted assumption has in the past led to mistaken assessments of Islam and continues to foster genuine misunderstanding concerning the real

nature of Islamic religion and intellectual traditions. The misunderstanding is unfortunately not unique to Westerners. For the majority of Muslims today are also woefully uninformed of the depth and scope of their rich heritage on the authoritative validity of reason. Thinking Muslims should work to vindicate the symbiotic relation of faith and reason in their religion and see it as a source of enrichment and contribution of Islam to human understanding and civilization.

CONCLUSION

This essay advanced a Quranic perspective on thinking, which is affirmative in critical and goal-oriented thinking and also provides a set of guidelines that ensures its purity and purpose from negative reductionist influences. The guidelines so provided are also rich in advancing a spiritual dimension with the understanding that thinking which is not informed by morality and faith can lose its direction and purpose and can even become harmful to human welfare. From the Quranic vantage point, the sciences of nature should be key to our cognition of the signs of God in the universe. For this may be instrumental in solving individual and social problems without interrupting the cosmic order and the human habitat on earth. The blatant disregard of ethical values in science has weakened scientists' sense of responsibility and contributed to the degradation of the human condition on the globe.

Since thinking is a skill that can be advanced by self-application and training, it is amenable to guidance, bereavement, and enrichment. Universities and institutions of learning in Muslim countries are generally short of resources, and those who have the means still fall short, to their detriment, of nurturing the culture of reading and research among their students and scholars. Centers of higher learning may do well to establish a new order of relationship between the natural sciences and humanities, and between all fields of knowledge and human welfare and also the avenues of benefit to society. The present-day education system is due for a reappraisal in order to instill creative thinking and breadth of vision among students and scholars that is informed by the inter-relatedness of the various disciplines of learning. This could be done, as one observer suggested, "by adding sufficient number of courses in humanities to the science and engineering curricula, by cross-disciplinary interaction and collaboration."[33] The main characteristic of the human sciences, from the Islamic perspective, is that they are not value-free and have to be incorporated within the value system of Islam that is informed by the ethical and human dimension of values.

It is ironic to note, however, that the vast majority of Muslims are wont to rote reading of the Quran which is patently vacuous and devoid of thinking. The Quran is usually read, committed to memory, and cited for its spiritual merit rather than intellectual stimulation and enrichment. This is evidently not the advice one obtains from the Quran itself Al-Qaradawi has rightly observed

about the current realities of public education in Muslim countries that "the system relies on memorization and cramming more than it does on comprehension and analysis. A typical weakness of this method is that the memorizer forgets as soon as the exams are over. But if what is learned is founded in understanding and comprehension, its substance will remain in the mind and will not be prone to oblivion so quickly."[34]

But the issue that we raise here is well-entrenched and originates in the overall emphasis that most educationists and jurists of earlier times have placed on the study of the Quran, Hadith and *fiqh* manuals, often calling attention to words and sentences of the text at the expense of comprehension and analysis. The basic approach to Quran studies thus emphasized correct pronunciation and memorization. This repetitive system of learning was particularly pronounced in the context of child education, although it was not confined to this framework as other and more advanced levels of Islamic scholarship also bore the same influence.[35]

Notwithstanding the profound influence of the Quran on the thoughts, mores, and cultures of Muslim individuals and societies, thinking by its nature does not lend itself to any predetermined framework and guideline. It seems that the Quran also seeks only to provide signs and signposts on thinking, but the subjective and innately individual bent of thinking is often inspired by imagination and insight which cannot be encapsulated by definitions and guidelines. A creative mind is unique by its attributes, and thinking that originates in a learned and upright individual is one of the greatest gifts of creation that can itself fit the description of divine example, or sign, of God on earth.

It remains to be added though that imaginative thinking has also been sparkled by sources and influences among great Muslim thinkers of other cultures and traditions—just as we note also that the great thinkers of history emerged in all regions, cultures, and religions. The substance of these statements is upheld in a renowned Hadith in which the Prophet instructed the Muslims to "seek knowledge, even unto China," and in another Hadith that "wisdom is the lost property of the believer; he is entitled to it wherever he finds it."

Knowledge and wisdom must therefore be ultimately seen as the shared achievements of humanity, endowed and posited by its outstanding and creative thinkers. This is also known from the fact that the outcomes of creative thinking are often shared and experienced far beyond geographical locales and frontiers—more so perhaps in the age of globalization.

It is hoped that the great thinkers and leaders of humanity make it a part of their agenda and commitment to narrow down the distances and divides between the intellectual and cultural traditions of the world and aspire them to the veritable vision of a shared destiny and wider human fraternity in their deliberations.

Mohammad Hashim Kamali[36]

PREVIEW *BOOK YEAR 5*

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think, which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

Book Year 5 begins with Lesson 43 and Quranic Chapter 35 which is the 43rd Chapter revealed, followed by Quranic Chapters 19, 20, 56, 26 and, finally Quranic Chapter 27 the 48th Chapter revealed.

The chronological order of the chapters of the Quran that follow throughout the series is based on the list accepted by al-Azhar University in Cairo and is considered to be the official order. It differs greatly from the chronological order developed by Western scholars over the centuries and is much more detailed.

Quranic signs or verses (*ayat*) of each section (*ruku*) in a particular Quranic chapter are given in each lesson followed by a commentary, an analysis of the signs that answer three questions: Who is God?, How are the signs directed towards Prophet Muhammad? and How are the signs directed towards the Community? Following these questions, there is a section called Example of How Critical Thinking works. A short paragraph describes the Eight Elements of Reason and then a paragraph titled Example of How Quranic Critical Thinking Works. The paragraph that comes after this is for the student to determine which of the statements are one of the Eight Elements of Reasoning. Each Lesson ends with a Student Self-assessment.

We do not have a great deal of detailed information about the life of the Prophet Muhammad during the Makkah period. The information that we have falls in the various lessons. Appendix 1 correlates the original Quranic chapters with their chronological order.

LESSON 43(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY

THINKING INDEPENDENTLY

The Quran teaches us to think for ourselves when we read sign 2:256 that says that *there is no compulsion in religion* (din).

With this sign from God's point of view, we learn that it is up to each of us to have a close read of the Quran and decide whether or not to follow it. From reading the Quran with a critical mind, we learn how right judgment is clear from error. If we develop the following Quranic strategies or principles, and then practice the application of the principles, we will enhance our sense of intuition and insight. We will enhance our ability to reflect on our beliefs and actions. Quranic thinking encourages autonomous thinking, thinking for ourselves. We acquire many of our beliefs at an early age when we have a strong tendency to form beliefs for irrational reasons (because we want to believe, because we are rewarded for believing or punished for not doing so).

Quranic thinkers use critical skills and insights to reveal and eradicate beliefs to which they cannot rationally assent such as the beliefs of extremists. Quranic thinkers learn not to passively accept the beliefs of others; rather, they analyze issues themselves, reject unjustified authorities, and recognize the contributions of justified authorities. They thoughtfully form principles of thought and action; they do not mindlessly accept those presented to them. Nor are they unduly influenced by the language of another. If they find that a set of categories or distinctions is more appropriate than that suggested by another, they will use it. Recognizing that categories serve human purposes, they use those categories which best serve their purpose at the time. They are not limited by accepted ways of doing things. They evaluate both goals and how to achieve them. They do not accept as true, or reject as false, beliefs they do not understand. They are not easily manipulated.

Independent thinkers strive to incorporate all known relevant knowledge and insight into their thought and behavior. They strive to determine for themselves when information is relevant, when to apply a concept, or when to make use of a skill. They are self-monitoring: they catch their own mistakes; they don't need to be told what to do every step of the way.

The purpose or goal needs to be understood when you concern yourselves with accuracy and truth. You should ask yourself:

What evidence do I have to support this purpose?
How it can be explained to help others understand?
Can objections be raised from other points of view?
Are there any limitations to our point if view?

In the Quranic view, there is no compelling of ourselves or others to whatever it is that a person believes. This is what the Quran calls: *right judgment*

that is clear from error. It is free of being compelled to believe something.

It is possible to believe something because those around us believe in it or because someone has rewarded us for believing such-and-such. Or, it may be that our interests are best served by believing something or because someone is more comfortable believing this. It could also be that we believe in something because our ego and image of ourselves is defined by believing this-or-that. None of these reasons are that of a Quranic critical thinker because these reasons lack the evidence which the Quranic message provides. Each of us has to make up his or her own mind using *right judgment* about what it is that we believe.

In order for us to be sure that our beliefs and actions are based on good reasons and evidence provided by the Quranic message, we need to be rational. We do this by critiquing our own irrationality which includes our own fears and desires. We are rational when we cultivate our desire for clarity, accuracy and fair-mindedness and, then, integrate them into our behavior and thoughts.

WHAT DOES "THINKING INDEPENDENTLY" MEAN?

An education in Quranic Studies respects our autonomy. We should be encouraged to discover information and use our knowledge, skills and insights to think for ourselves. Merely giving us 'facts' or telling us 'the right way' to answer a question is a way of compelling us to believe. Accepting beliefs through compulsion does not lead to being able to discern *right judgment*. We believe because we have been told what to believe. We have not been taught how to think to then believe. We learn that developing "discernment," deciding something for ourselves, leads to *right judgment becoming clear from error.*

In other words, the Quran teaches how to think to then believe, not what to believe without knowing how to think. The Quranic process of teaching how to think—by thinking independently without being compelled to think—leads to right judgment in belief. Being compelled to believe through social pressure or due to a teaching method that solely relies on memorization results in a thought-less belief, an un-discerning belief.

QURANIC CHAPTER 35: THE ORIGINATOR (AL-FATIR)
SIGNS 35:1-35:7

Makkah: *The Praise belongs to God,*
One Who is the Originator of the heavens and the earth,
the One Who Makes the angels messengers imbued with wings
by twos and in threes and fours.
He increases in creation what He wills.

Truly, God is Powerful over everything. (35:1)
Whatever God may open of mercy to humanity,
there is not one who holds it back.
And what He holds back,
there is not one who sends it after that.
And He is The Almighty, The Wise. (35:2)
O humanity! Remember the divine blessing of God on you!
Is there anyone who is a creator other than God
Who provides for you from the heaven and the earth?
There is no god but He.
Then, how you are misled! (35:3)
And if they deny ***you****, surely,*
Messengers before ***you*** *were denied.*
And to God all affairs are returned. (35:4)
O humanity! Truly, the promise of God is true.
So let not this present life delude you.
And let not the deluder delude you about God. (35:5)
Truly, Satan is an enemy to you
so take him to yourselves as an enemy.
He calls only his party that they be
among the Companions of the Blaze. (35:6)
Those who were ungrateful, for them will be a severe punishment.
And those who believed and did
as the ones in accord with morality,
for them there is forgiveness
and a great compensation. (35:7)

COMMENTARY°

Signs 35:1-35:3 highlight three major truths of the Quranic faith: The oneness of God, the Creator of all; the grace that He alone bestows; and that He is the only One who provides sustenance for all His creation. Sign 35:4, the Quran addresses the Prophet, comforting him because his people's rejection of his message and their false accusations of his lying caused him much pain. It stresses that all matters are in God's hand.

It also addresses us all, confirming that God's promise is a true promise and warning us against Satan's schemes which aim to divert us from recognizing the major truths already outlined. What Satan, our avowed enemy, wants is to lead us to hell and its torment. It shows us the types of requital that await the believers and unbelievers in the life to come. Finally it enjoins the Prophet not to worry about what might happen to them. Both belief and rejection are in God's hand, and He knows all that people do.

RHYTHM OF THE SIGNS

This Makkan section possesses a special character both in its subject and style. It perhaps best compares with chapter 13, Thunder, in the way in which it addresses the human heart, using, from start to finish, a fascinating rhythm employing various beats. It moves us into contemplation of the great universe and the numerous signs to be found in every nook and cranny. The human being thus remembers God's blessings and appreciates the grace and favor He bestows on all His creatures. He also visualizes the end suffered by earlier communities and their fate on the Day of Judgment. He thus feels humility as he looks at the countless marvels that constitute God's work. He also recognizes that there is only one truth and one law running through all existence, and that this is controlled by God's hand. It imparts all this in a style and rhythm that leaves a profound and powerful effect on our minds.

The great universe, with its limitless expanse, has been brought into existence by God, according to His design.

THE ORIGINATOR

The section begins by offering all praise to God, as its whole purpose is to make our hearts turn to Him, contemplate His signs, appreciate His mercy, and look at the wonders of His creation. We are made to fully appreciate these wonders so that our hearts overflow with His praise and glorification: *The Praise belongs to God.*

Next comes God's attribute indicating creation and His bringing it into being: *One Who is the Originator of the heavens and the earth.* It is He who has originated all these great bodies, some of which we see around us. We know only a little about the smallest and nearest to us of all these bodies, i.e. our mother earth. Yet they are all subject to one law of nature that keeps them in harmony, despite the huge distances separating them, which we can only imagine with great difficulty. Despite their great sizes and endless spaces separating their orbits, there exists certain relations between them which, if disturbed even by just a little, could lead to a major catastrophe.

The Praise belongs to God, One Who is the Originator of the heavens and the earth, the One Who Makes the angels messengers imbued with wings by twos and in threes and fours. (35:1) This section dwells long on God's messengers, revelation and the truth it contains. The angels are God's messengers to His chosen servants on earth. The message they bring is the greatest thing in life. Therefore, God follows the reference to His creation of the heavens and the earth by mentioning the role of the angels whereby it is they who make contact between heaven and earth, fulfilling the greatest task of all

as they deliver His message. It is a message from the Originator of the heavens and the earth to His prophets whom He sends as guides to humanity.

For the first time in the Quran we have a physical description of the angels. Here we have a reference to their physical appearance. They are 'endowed with wings, two, or three, or four.' This description does not, however, help us imagine how they look, because we do not know anything about their physique or about the form their wings take. We can do no more than take this description as it is, without adding anything from our imagination, for anything we may imagine could be wrong. We do not have any definite description of how the angels look from a reliable source.

Wings are specified as being in twos, threes and fours, but we know only a two-winged form in all birds. Therefore, the opening sign states that God. *He increases in creation what He wills*, thus making it clear that God's will is free, unlimited to any one form of creation. We know and see countless forms of creation, but the ones we do not know about are far more numerous. *Truly, God is Powerful over everything*. This comment is broader and more comprehensive than the statement before it. Its import applies to all forms of creation, origination, transformation and alteration.

UNRESTRICTED GRACE

Whatever God may open of mercy to humanity, there is not one who holds it back. And what He holds back, there is not one who sends it after that. And He is The Almighty, The Wise. (35:2)

What we have in this second sign of this section is an aspect of God's power mentioned at the end of the first sign. When this aspect is instilled in a person's heart and mind, he undergoes a complete transformation in his concepts, feelings, values, standards and life generally. It invalidates any thought of any other power having any control over the heavens and earth, and puts him in touch with God's own power. It makes him abandon any thought of receiving grace from anyone else and links all to God's grace. It closes before him every door and way in the universe yet opens for him the door and the way leading to God.

Whatever God may open of mercy to humanity, there is not one who holds it back. (35:2) All that people need to be assured of God's mercy is to request it from Him directly, without intermediaries: *And what He holds back, there is not one who sends it after that.* (35:2)

It was with signs and images like this that the Quran produced that unique community of believers in the early days of the Quranic message. It was a community molded under God's own care, and

through the Quran, so as to function as a means of God's will and establish on earth the faith, values and systems He wanted to establish. In that first community we have a unique example of human life that seems to us today to belong to the realm of legends and dreams. That community did not deal with the Quran as words, sentences and signs with superb meanings, but dealt with the truth those signs represented. Furthermore, they practised it in real life. Yet, still today, the Quran is able to produce, by means of its signs, individuals and communities that can achieve, by God's leave, whatever God wills them to achieve. All of us can read the Quran seriously, implement it fully and live its meanings as though they are a tangible reality.

WHO ELSE?

The third sign in this short passage confirms the import of the first two, reminding people of God's blessings, emphasizing that God is the only One who creates and provides sustenance for His creation, and wondering at how people lose sight of this truth when it is so clear and obvious: *O humanity! Remember the divine blessing of God on you! Is there anyone who is a creator other than God Who provides for you from the heaven and the earth? There is no god but He. Then, how you are misled.* (35:3)

Nothing is needed more than the mention of God's blessings for people to see, feel and recognize them. Nevertheless, they do forget them. The earth around them and the skies above them give them abundant blessings and unlimited sustenance, in every step and at every moment. It is God the Creator who gives all this. They are asked here whether there is a different creator who provides them with all the good things in their hands. Obviously, they cannot say this. Indeed, they did not even claim this during their worst period of idolatry, associating all sorts of partners with God. Since there is none other than God to create and provide, why do they not remember and express gratitude? Why do they not address their gratitude to Him alone and express their thanks by praises and prayers? Indeed, *there is no god but He.* How is it that they turn away from this indisputable truth? *Then, how you are misled.* (35:3) It is most singular that anyone should turn away from this clear truth, evidenced by the constant sustenance they are provided with from heaven and earth. Even more singular is for a person to turn away from it all while admitting that all sustenance comes from God alone.

Just these three signs constitute the first section of the section. In each we have an image that gives us rebirth. All that is needed is for us to firmly establish God's truth in our heart and conscience.

THE TRUE PROMISE

The first address is aimed at the Prophet: *And if they deny you, surely, Messengers before you were denied. And to God all affairs are returned.* (35:4) With all these truths easily and clearly recognizable, you need not worry that they accuse you of lying. The same thing happened to earlier messengers. All matters eventually return to God who determines every end the way He pleases.

Then the address is made general, to all people: (35:5-35:6) God's promise is true: There is no doubt that it will come. It is a reality that will not fail. It is the truth. Nothing can cause it to disappear, lose its way or change. Nevertheless this present life can delude people, as can Satan. *So let not this present life delude you And let not the deluder delude you about God.* (35:5) Satan has declared his hostility to you and that he will never be anything but an enemy to you. Therefore: *Satan is an enemy to you so take him to yourselves as an enemy.* (35:6) Do not befriend him, listen to his advice, follow in his footsteps, for no rational person would follow in his enemy's footsteps. Moreover, you should realize that he does not call you to anything good, nor does he want you to be safe: *He calls only his party that they be among the Companions of the Blaze.* (35:6) Can anyone with reason and clear thinking answer a call that would put him in the fire?

Such single-mindedness demanded from believers is followed by an outline of the fate of those who responded to Satan's call. To reinforce the contrast, the situation of the believers who reject him and drive him away is reiterated: *Those who were ungrateful, for them will be a severe punishment. And those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality, for them there is forgiveness and a great compensation.* (35:7)

Thinking independently of his tribe, support comes for the Muslims from the Messenger's uncle and foster brother, Hamza ibn Abd al-Muttalib. He is known as a valiant warrior. He gives his allegiance to the Messenger. This conversion gives added strength to the first followers of Muhammad.

One day as Hamza is returning from hunting. He hears that Abu Jahl of the Makhzum tribe has again insulted the Messenger and caused him great anguish. His zeal aroused, he senses silence is unmanly at a time like this. He goes directly to the Kabah. He strikes Abu Jahl on the head so hard with his belt before the eyes of the Makhzum Clan that blood flows. Abu Jahl senses such fear that not only does he not show any reaction, he even apologizes and says: I should not have said those things about Muhammad.

Hamza ibn Abdul Muttalib (c.566–625 CE) is a companion and

paternal uncle of the Prophet Muhammad. Hamza's father is Abd al-Muttalib ibn Hashim ibn Abd al-Manaf ibn Qusayy from the Quraysh tribe in Makkah. His mother is Halah bint Uhayb from the Zuhrah Clan of the Quraysh. His parents had met when Abd al-Muttalib had gone with his son Abd Allah to the house of Wahb ibn Abd al-Manaf to seek the hand of Wahb's niece, Amina, for his son.

While they are there, Abd al-Muttalib notices Wahb's daughter, Halah bint Uhayb, and he ask for her hand as well. Wahb agrees, and Muhammad's father Abd Allah and his grandfather Abdal-Muttalib are both married on the same day in a double marriage ceremony. Hence Hamza is the younger brother of Muhammad's father. Hamza is Muhammad's foster-brother: they had both been suckled by the wet-nurse Thuwaybah.

Upon returning to Makkah once after a hunting trip in the desert, Hamza hears that Abu Jahl had "attacked the Prophet and abused and insulted him," "speaking spitefully of his religion and trying to bring him into disrepute." Muhammad had not replied to him.

Filled with rage, Hamza goes out at a run intending to punish Abu Jahl when he meets him. He enters the Kabah, where Abu Jahl is sitting with the elders, stands over him and strikes him a violent blow with his bow. He says: Will you insult him, when I am of his religion and say what he says? Hit me back if you can! He strikes Abu Jahl's head with a blow that cut open his head.

Some of Abu Jahl's relatives approach to help him, but he tells them: Leave Abu Umara [Hamza] alone, for, by God, I insulted his nephew deeply.

After that incident, Hamza enters the House of Al-Arqam and accepts the faith. Hamza's faith is complete. He follows the Messenger's commands. When he becomes a Muslim, the Quraysh recognize that the Messenger had become strong, and had found a protector in Hamza, so they abandoned some of their ways of harassing him. Instead, they tried to strike bargains with him; but he does not accept their offers.

Abd ibn Qusayy Clan

Tulayb ibn Umayr ibn Wahb: He is the son of Muhammad's paternal aunt, Arwah bint Abd al-Muttalib.[1] Tulayb accepts Islam in the house of Arqam. He tells his mother that he now believes in the One God and follows Muhammad. She said that he did the right thing. She adds: And by the Lord, if I had the strength to do that which men do, I would also defend and protect him.

Tulayb said: But, my mother, what prevents you from believing and following him. Your brother Hamza has believed.

She said: I will wait to see what my sisters do. I will do the same as they.

He said: I beg you, mother, by the Lord! Will you not go to him and bear witness to his faith?

She does so and helps Muhammad's cause from then on.[2]

These are among the first Muslims who gather around the Messenger at this most difficult time. They do not hesitate to bear torture or exile or to give up their life, property, family, well-being, and worldly desires. Those who understand know that if the Quranic message is to serve the consciousness and the spiritual perfection of human civilization and culture, it will be because of people who give of things that they themselves need (*ithar*). They know that not only will later Muslims bless them, but human civilization and morality, in general, will move closer to the goal of completing and perfecting the Will of God as it moves through human nature. They know that the lives and deeds of these early Muslims will not only reflect the purity of the faith's early beginnings, but also help in presenting the real visage of the Messenger to humanity. These are some of them who bear witness to the Messenger and his message.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 35:1-35:7

WHO IS GOD?

Praise belongs to God who originated the heavens and the earth. He created the angel messengers and increases in creation what He wills.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quranic message tells Prophet Muhammad that Messengers before him were also denied.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The Quranic message tells the community that the promise of God is true. They should not let Satan, the deluder, delude them. He calls them to the blaze. Those who are ungrateful will have a severe punishment while there is forgiveness and a great compensation for those who believe and act in accord with morality.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

Questions of accuracy force you to evaluate and test for truth and correctness.

How does right judgment become clear from error?

How is this an example of accuracy?

How could we verify or test it?

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message comforts the Prophet because of some of the Quraysh denial and rejection of his message. Were Messengers before denied? Messengers before Muhammad were denied. All things are in God's hand and, therefore, it is not Muhammad's fault that some of the Quraysh continue to deny the message. Those who continue to deny the message are mislead. There is no god but He. There is only one God who is the Originator of the heavens and the earth. Creation has only one Creator. The Quranic message.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to think Quranically in regard to there being no compulsion in the way of life (*din*).

I studied the signs as a way to begin to think Quranically. (Since you are in a Quranic Studies class, your goal should be to think Quranically.)

I was able to ask questions.

I engaged myself in lectures and discussions by asking questions.

By asking questions, I realized that I discovered what I did and did not know.

LESSON 43(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY DEVELOPING INSIGHT INTO EGO-CENTRICITY OR SOCIO-CENTRICITY

In the Quranic perspective, ego-centricity as exemplified by the extremists (Salafists) as being selfish, self-centered, egocentric, thinking only of himself or herself without regard for the feelings or desires of others; having or regarding himself or herself as the center of all things. These are signs of ingratitude. It is to be irrational and unjust, having little or no regard for interests, beliefs, or attitudes other than one's own.

The ungrateful in Makkah at the time of the revelation, similar to the extremists (Salafists) today, cannot readily believe that they are acting out of self-interest. They continue to be unwilling to consider the point of view of others, believing that their view is 'the truth'. They refuse to accept the points of view of others when that would prevent them from getting what they thought that they want. They have to be right about everything. Being self-centered is the opposite of thinking critically.

Ego-centricity in terms of critical thinking is to confuse the immediate perception with reality. It manifests itself as an inability or unwillingness to consider others' points of view, to accept ideas or facts which would conflict with gratification of desire. In the extreme, it is characterized by a need to be right about everything, a lack of interest in consistency and clarity, an all or nothing attitude: I am 100% right; you are 100% wrong, and a lack of self-consciousness of one's own thought processes. The ego-centric individual is more concerned with the appearance of truth, fairness, and fair-mindedness, than with actually being correct, fair, or fair-minded. Egocentricity is the opposite of critical thought.

Uncritical and selfishly critical thought are often prejudiced. What is prejudice? A judgment, belief, opinion, point of view—favorable or unfavorable—formed before the facts are known, resistant to evidence and reason, or in disregard of facts which contradict it. Self-announced prejudice is rare. Prejudice almost always exists in obscured, rationalized, socially validated, functional forms. It enables people to sleep peacefully at night even while flagrantly abusing the rights of others. It enables people to get more of what they want, or to get it more easily. It is often sanctioned with a superabundance of pomp and self-righteousness. Unless those who are prone to radicalization recognize these powerful tendencies toward selfish thought in the Salafi ideology, even in what appear to be lofty actions and moralistic rhetoric, they will not face squarely the problem of prejudice in human thought and action.

Most instruction in schools today, because students do not think their way to what they accept as true, tends to give people prejudices rather than knowledge. For example, partly as a result of schooling, people often accept as authorities those who incite irrational fear in them and unjust opinions. This

prejudice toward pseudo-authority impedes rational assessment. Ego-centric identification extends to groups. The individual goes from: I am right! to: We are right! To put this another way, people find that they can often best satisfy their egocentric desires through a group.

Their belief in their own rightness is easier to maintain because they suppress the faults in their thinking. They automatically hide their ego-centricity from themselves. They fail to notice when their behavior contradicts their self-image. They base their reasoning on false assumptions they are unaware of making. They fail to make relevant distinctions of which they are otherwise aware, and able to make (when making such distinctions does not prevent them from getting what they want). They deny or conveniently 'forget' facts inconsistent with their conclusions. They often misunderstand or distort what others say.

The solution, then, is to learn how the Quran, their sacred text, teaches how to reflect on their reasoning and behavior; to make their assumptions explicit, to critique them, and, when they are false, stop making them; to apply the same concepts in the same ways to themselves and others; to consider every relevant fact, and to make their conclusions consistent with the evidence; and to listen carefully and openmindedly to those with whom they disagree. They can change egocentric tendencies when they see them for what they are: irrational and unjust. Therefore, the development of the awareness of students of their egocentric and sociocentric patterns of thought is a crucial part of education in Quranic critical thinking.

We can learn from the Quran how to reflect in order to solve any problem of self-centeredness or egocentricity that we may have. We should learn to reflect on our reasoning ability as well as on our behavior. This we do by clarifying our beliefs, critiquing them and when we realize that they may be false, we stop believing or behaving as we had been doing. We should reflect on all the relevant facts and make sure that our conclusions are consistent with the evidence we have before us. We need to listen carefully to others and be open-minded to other points of view.

As people are socialized, ego-centricity partly evolves into socio-centricity. What is socio-centricity? It is the assumption by extremists, for instance, that their own social group is inherently and self-evidently superior to all others. When a group or society sees itself as superior and so considers its views about the world as correct or as the only reasonable or justifiable views, and all its actions justified, there is a tendency to presuppose this superiority in all of its thinking and thus to think closed-mindedly. All dissent and doubt are considered disloyal, and rejected without consideration. Few people recognize the socio-centric nature of much of their thought. They develop a prejudice.

Being sociocentric is to tend to regard one's own social group or family as superior to others. When students study the early pre-Islamic community,

they find that the Arabs in pre-Islamic times followed tribal law. Their slogan was: My tribe, right or wrong; my tribe is better than your tribe; my family is better than your family. This was how their individual self-centeredness transformed into socio-centricity. Thinkers, such as the pre-Quranic Arab, who were not critical thinkers, often confused their loyalty to their group by constant support even if their group was wrong. 'Group think' results when people egocentrically attach themselves to a group. One can see this in both children and adults: My daddy is better than your daddy! My school (religion, country, race, etc.) is better than yours.

If ego-centricity and socio-centricity are the disease, critical thinking that brings self-awareness is the cure. In cases in which their own egocentric commitments are not supported, few people accept another's egocentric reasoning. Most can identify the socio-centricity of members of opposing groups. Yet when we are thinking egocentrically or socio-centrically, it seems right to students (at least at the time).

Although everyone has egocentric, sociocentric, and critical (or fairminded) tendencies to some extent, the purpose of education in critical thinking is to help us move away from ego-centricity and socio-centricity toward increasingly critical thought. The sacred text helps us learn about their own sense of irrationality and injustice to the extent that it is present. Students should repeatedly discuss why people think irrationally and act unfairly.

A teacher can facilitate discussions of ego-centric or socio-centric thought and behavior whenever such discussions seem relevant. Such discussions can be used as a basis for having students think about their own egocentric or sociocentric tendencies. The class can discuss conditions under which people are most likely to be egocentric and how ego-centricity interferes with their ability to think and listen. By discussing what people think (and how they think) when they are being egocentric and sociocentric, students can begin to recognize common patterns of ego-centric thought. The class can discuss some of the common false assumptions they make at times. For example:

Anyone who disapproves of anything I do is wrong or unfair.
I have a right to have everything I want.
Truth is what I want it to be. Different is bad.
Our group (country, school, language, etc.) is better than any other.

Point out the contradictions of ego-centric attitudes:

When I use something of yours without permission, it is borrowing.
When you use something of mine, it is stealing.
Taking something without asking is okay. Taking something without asking is wrong.

Persons like Pharaoh or Korah illustrate ego-centricity.

The most real and immediate form of socio-centricity you experience is in the mini-society of your peers. Their attitudes present a microcosm of the patterns which exist on a larger scale in societies. Most peer groups share some attitudes which are socio-centric. Furthermore, they divide themselves into 'subcultures' or cliques', each of which is narrower than the 'culture'. Honest and realistic exploration of these phenomena allow you to clarify and evaluate the ways in which 'group think' limits you.

The Quranic text often attempts to discourage socio-centricity by encouraging tolerance—asking you to agree that people whose ways are different are not necessarily wrong. Yet, if your classroom discussion remains general and specific advantages of different ways are not introduced, you are left with a vague sense that you should be tolerant, rather than a clear Quranic sense that others have ways worth knowing about and learning from. Encourage yourself to recognize socio-centric bias, reconstruct and consider other views of current and historical issues, and discuss how to avoid thinking socio-centrically.

Assume not those who are misers that what God has given them of His grace is better for them. Nay! It is worse for them. To be hung around their necks will be what they were misers with on the Day of Resurrection. To God is the heritage of the heavens and the earth. God is Aware of what you do. (3:180)

In the month of Rajab, the 5th year of the revelation (on or about April 17,614-May 16, 614 CE), the Messenger and some of the people of the Hashim tribe are under the protection of Abu Talib and somewhat immune to the enemy, but life is very difficult for them as they are faced with the socio-centricity of the idol worshipping Quraysh. Because of this, the Messenger feels it advisable for them and others who are suffering persecution to migrate to Abyssinia.

When the Messenger sees the affliction of his companions and that though he escapes it because of his standing with God and his uncle Abu Talib, he cannot protect them, he says to them: If you were to go to Abyssinia (it would be better for you), for the king (Negris) will not tolerate injustice and it is a friendly country, until such time as God shall relieve you from your distress. Thereupon his companions go to Abyssinia, being afraid of apostasy and fleeing to God with their religion. This is the first migration. It had been a land with which the Quraysh used to do trade because they found there an abundance of food, protection and good trade.[3]

[Ten] men, some mounted and some on foot, and four of them accompanied with their wives, set out for the port of Shueiba. They

found two vessels about to sail. They embarked in haste and were taken to Abyssinia for half a dinar each. The Quraysh opponents pursued them, but they had already left the port.

Thus, a group of the Muslims from various tribes who migrate to Abyssinia under the leadership of Uthman ibn Mazun without the idolaters knowing anything about it. They flee at night in secret. They leave Makkah for Jeddah to go by ship to Abyssinia.

It is a difficult journey, in particular, for women and children. They are able to bear it because of their deep faith. When the idolaters learn of what had happened, a group go to Jeddah to prevent them from going, but they arrive too late.

The Muslims remain in Abyssinia during the months of Shaban and Ramadan. When word reaches them that the Quraysh are no longer torturing the people, they return to Makkah in the month of Shawwal (on or about July 15, 614-August 12, 614 CE). However, upon returning, they find that the reports that had been given to them had not been correct and some of them return to Abyssinia such as Abd Allah ibn Masud who had no protector in Makkah. He immediately returned to Abyssinia in the month of Shawwal in the 5th year of the revelation.[5]

Quranic Chapter 35: The Originator (al-Fatir)
Signs 35:8-35:14

Makkah: *Then, who is there*
that was made to appear pleasing to him
the direness of his actions
so that, then, he saw it as fairer?
Truly, God causes to go astray whomever He wills
and guides whomever He wills.
So let not your soul be wasted in regret for them.
Truly, God is Knowing of what they craft! (35:8)
And it is God Who sent the winds so that they raise clouds
and We drove them to a dead land
and We gave life by them to the earth after its death.
Thus, will be the rising! (35:9)
Whoever had been wanting great glory, great glory
belongs to God altogether.
To Him Words of what is good rise.
He exalts the actions of one in accord with morality.
But those who plan evil deeds,
for them will be a severe punishment.
And the planning of those, it will come to nothing. (35:10)

And God created you from earth dust:
Again, from seminal fluid. Again, He made you pairs.
And no female carries nor brings forth her burden
but with His Knowledge.
No one who is given a long life is given a long life,
nor is anything reduced from his lifetime but it is in a Book.
Truly, that is easy for God. (35:11)
The two bodies of water are not on the same level.
This is agreeable, water of the sweetest kind,
that which is delicious to drink,
and the other is salty, bitter.
But from each you eat succulent flesh
and pull out glitter that you wear.
And ***you*** *will see the boats,*
that which plows through the waves on it,
that you be looking for His grace
and so that perhaps you will give thanks. (35:12)
He causes the nighttime to be interposed in the daytime
and He causes the daytime to be interposed into the nighttime
and He caused the sun to be subservient and the moon.
Each runs its course for a term, that is determined.
That is God, your Lord. For Him is the dominion!
And those whom you call to other than Him possess
not even the white spot of a date stone. (35:13)
If you call to them, they would not hear your supplication.
Even if they heard, they would not respond to you.
And on the Day of Resurrection they will disbelieve
in your association with them.
And none tells ***you*** *like One Who is Aware.* (35:14)

COMMENTARY°

THE KEY TO EVIL

The signs give an explanation of what makes people go astray, the nature of Satan's work, the sign being the presence of ego and socio-centricity, the door through which all evil flows. It shows the route that takes people astray and why, when a person goes far along it, he cannot turn back.

This is the key to all evil: Satan makes evil deeds seem fair to people, and they will then admire themselves for what they do. Such a person will not review his work to identify what is right or where he has gone wrong, because he feels he cannot go wrong. He is so preoccupied with self-admiration that he does not give a thought to self-criticism. Needless to say, he likes accountability to others much

less. He does not permit anyone to question him about anything he does, because he feels it is good and, therefore, above criticism. This is the worst curse Satan invokes on a person, and can be likened to a yoke he puts around his neck taking him far into error and its inevitable results.

A person who follows God's guidance is one who is careful, wary and alert. He knows that feelings change, that weakness may creep into one's heart, and that a short fall may occur. He is, therefore, always looking at his own work, wary of yielding to Satan's temptation and praying for God's help. This is indeed the point of difference between right and wrong, success and failure. It is a fine psychological point which the Quran describes in a few succinct words: *Then, who is there that was made to appear pleasing to him the direness of his actions so that, then, he saw it as fairer.* (35:8)

The Quranic sign adds a statement that can be taken as implying a reply: *Truly, God causes to go astray whomever He wills and guides whomever He wills.* (35:8) It is as if we are told that such a person is doomed to be in error as a result of Satan making his evil deeds seem fair to him. It is in the nature of error and guidance that the former makes an evil action seem fair and that the latter keeps a person on the alert ensuring good work.

Therefore: *Let not your soul be wasted in regret for them. Truly, God is Knowing of what they craft.* (35:8) This question of going astray or following guidance does not belong to any human being, not even God's Messenger. It belongs to God alone. It is He who changes hearts as He pleases. As He states this fact, God comforts His Messenger so that his tender heart does not sorrow too much for the ungrateful. The Prophet always grieved when he saw his people's persistence in going astray, knowing where that would lead them. Therefore, God tells him not to let his desire to make them follow guidance and recognize the truth overburden him with sorrow. God wanted him to know that this is none of his concern.

The same desire is felt by advocates of the Quranic message. The more sincere they are in their advocacy, and the more they appreciate the goodness and beauty of their way, the keener they are that other people should see the truth for what it is and follow it. These advocates, however, would be better advised to understand what God says here to His Messenger and to act on the same. They should do their best to present their message, but they must not grieve for those who remain blind to it.

Truly, God is Knowing of what they craft. (35:8) He sets them on the road to His guidance or lets them go astray according to what He knows of their work. He knows the truth about all their deeds and

what they involve even before they do them. He determines their lot in accordance with His absolute knowledge, but he does not hold people to account until they have actually done their deeds.

This third section takes us on several rounds in the great universe where the Quran depicts a variety of phenomena and imagery which all confirm faith and provide irrefutable proof in support of it. This follows from the earlier discussion about guidance and going astray, and comforting the Prophet so he would not grieve over the constant rejection of the ungrateful. Whoever wants to look for the truth, its evidence is available with glorious clarity everywhere in the universe. Anyone who chooses to go astray does so against such irrefutable evidence.

THE SOURCE OF ALL POWER

And it is God Who sent the winds so that they raise clouds and We drove them to a dead land and We gave life by them to the earth after its death. (35:9)

This phenomenon is frequently mentioned within the context of evidence to the truth derived from the universe. It shows the wind raising clouds. In fact hot winds make sea water evaporate, then cold winds in the atmosphere condense the vapor making clouds which are then driven in different directions by winds in the upper strata of the atmosphere. Then they arrive at the destination God has determined for them, which may be a dead land which He wants to quicken by means of the rain carried by these clouds. Indeed, water is the source of all life on this planet.*We drove them to a dead land and We gave life by them to the earth after its death.* (35:9) Thus the miracle occurs. It happens at every moment, but people are oblivious to its significance. Yet despite this miracle of life springing up at every moment, they continue to deny resurrection which they see happening in their world all about them. Simply and without argument, the Quran says: *Thus, will be the rising.* (35:9)

This scene is used frequently in the Quran for two reasons: first it provides tangible, undeniable evidence and secondly it has a strong influence on people's hearts and minds when they contemplate it without hindrance. Moreover, it is a beautiful image, particularly in the desert, which looks barren and lifeless today, and then gushes with life the next. In this way the Quran uses the inspiration of things people see all around them. They may ignore them because of familiarity, but when they contemplate them with an alert mind and heart, they appreciate just how miraculous they are.

There is here a sudden jolt as the section moves on to speak of might, power and dignity, linking this with good words that are wel-

come by God and good action that is blessed by Him. The opposite is also shown, whereby wicked scheming leads to ruin: *Whoever had been wanting great glory, great glory belongs to God altogether. To Him Words of what is good rise. He exalts the actions of one in accord with morality. But those who plan evil deeds, for them will be a severe punishment. And the planning of those, it will come to nothing.* (35:10)

Perhaps the link between life starting in what is lifeless and a good word and action is the fact that there is good life in all. The idolaters used their idolatry to retain their religious position in Makkah, one which gave them leadership of the Arabian tribes, and which facilitated various privileges. Needless to say, the most important of these were power and glory. Therefore, they used to say to the Prophet: *If we follow the guidance with you, we would be snatched away from our region.* (28:57) Therefore, God tells them: *Whoever had been wanting great glory, great glory belongs to God altogether.* (35:10)

When this fact is well established in people's hearts and minds, it ensures that values, standards, as well as means and methods undergo a complete change. The truth is that might and glory belong totally to God. No one else possesses a shred of either. Therefore, if anyone wants them, and they are incidentally expressed in one Arabic word, *izzah* (great glory), which combines both and adds connotations of dignity, then they should seek them from their only source: God Almighty. They cannot be found with anyone else.

The Quraysh sought to enjoy might and glory among the Arabs through idolatrous beliefs that lacked real substance. They feared to follow divine guidance, even though they acknowledged that it was guidance, because they feared for their own status. Yet those people, the Arabian tribes and clans, were not a source of might and glory. They could not give or deny these to anyone: *Whoever had been wanting great glory, great glory belongs to God altogether.* (35:10) If they enjoyed any measure of power and might, it was only because God gave them this. Therefore, anyone who wishes to have these should go to the original source, not to a recipient of that source. Recipients can only give what they have in excess. Besides, recipients are also weak and in need.

This is an essential truth of the Quranic message which establishes values, standards, judgment, behavior, ways and means. When this truth is firmly rooted in one's heart, one does not hesitate to stand up in dignity and glory to the rest of the world, knowing from whom one derives might and glory. Such a person does not bow before any despot, storm, calamity, state, or worldly force whatsoever. Why

would they when all might and glory belong to God alone, and when no one receives any portion of it without His leave?

This is the reason good words and right actions are mentioned here: *To Him Words of what is good rise and He exalts an action in accord with morality* (35:10) This is mentioned here for a purpose: It is a reference to the means by which might and glory are assured for those who seek it from God. Good words and good deeds which are allowed to ascend to God where they are received with honor that reflects on the speaker who says the good word and does the good work.

True *izzah*, combining all connotations of dignity and glory, is first established in one's heart before it takes any form in the outside world. When it is so established, the person concerned rises above all considerations that cause humiliation and prostration before anyone other than God. He rises first of all above his own fears, desires and ambitions that may be gratified by others. When he has done this, no one will ever be able to humiliate or subjugate him. People are only humbled by their desires, fears and ambitions. Should these be held in check, that person will retain his glory and dignity in all situations and with all people. This is indeed true might, glory and dignity.

True *izzah* is not stubbornness that seeks strength through falsehood, or tyranny that uses brutal force to silence others, or an overwhelming upsurge motivated by desire, or a blind force that pays no heed to right and justice. It is none of this. It is the ability to rise above one's own desires, rejecting fetters and humiliations, and refusing to submit to any other than God. It also means submitting only to God, fearing Him alone and obeying Him in all situations. It is through submission to God alone that our heads are raised high, and through fearing Him that we can stand up to whatever He disapproves of. Our watching Him also means that we care nothing for anything other than earning His pleasure. This then explains the relation between the good word and deed on the one hand and might, glory and dignity on the other.

The opposite picture is then given: *But those who plan evil deeds, for them will be a severe punishment. And the planning of those, it will come to nothing.* (35:10) Such people will see that their plots and schemes yield no fruit and end in failure, and that they will endure severe suffering as a result. We note here the contrasting image which brings life to a lifeless land.

These people plot evil because they are after false power and imagined glory. They may appear to have power at their command,

but it is the good word and deed that ascend to God and through which we receive *izzah* in its full sense. Evil schemes and plots cannot achieve this, even though they may occasionally be coupled with physical power. Their assured end, however, is ruin and severe suffering. This is God's promise that never fails.

THE CREATION OF THE HUMAN BEING

Having referred to the fact that all life starts with water, the section now refers to the start of our own life, beginning with pregnancy and followed by a term in this world, which can be long or short as God determines:

And God created you from earth dust: Again, from seminal fluid. Again, He made you pairs. And no female carries nor brings forth her burden but with His Knowledge. No one who is given a long life is given a long life, nor is anything reduced from his lifetime but it is in a Book. Truly, that is easy for God. (35:11)

Reference to our origin as a creature made from dust in the first place is often mentioned in the Quran, as is the first element in producing a pregnancy, namely the gamete. While a gamete is something that carries the potential of life, dust has no trace of life. The first miracle is life itself.

Nations and communities are the same as individuals: They may live long or have their lives cut short. Therefore, the Quranic statement includes them, as indeed it includes inanimate objects, such as rocks, caves and rivers which could have a long or short life span. Likewise, man-made things, such as buildings, machines and appliances, clothes, etc., may all live long or short lives. Every life duration, of every creature and everything, is recorded in God's book. This belongs to His absolute and infinite knowledge.

When we look at things in this light, we feel we want to contemplate the universe in a new way. Anyone who feels that God's hand and eye controls everything in such a meticulous manner will hardly ever forget or go astray. He will see God's hand, power and care in everything around him. This is the effect the Quran has on people's hearts and minds.

DIFFERENT WATERS

This section then focuses on a different phenomenon we all see, which is water and its varieties. One type of water is sweet and palatable while the other is bitter and salty. They go their separate ways, or meet together, by God's will, serving our needs:

The two bodies of water are not on the same level. This is agree-

able, water of the sweetest kind, that which is delicious to drink, and the other is salty, bitter. (35:12)

That God wanted water to be of different types is clear. That such variety serves a definite purpose is also something we should be clear about. We know some aspects of the wisdom behind providing sweet, palatable water, since we use it for different purposes. It is indeed essential for life.

The great balance wheel is that vast mass of water, the sea, from which have come life, food, rain, temperate climate, plants, animals, and ultimately the human being. Let him who comprehends this stand in awe before its majesty and gratefully acknowledge his obligations.

This is some of what we have been able to understand of the purpose behind the diversity of creation. It is clear that it is all done for a specific reason aiming to achieve harmony and balance, which allows the overall system of the universe to function. This can only be done by the Creator of the universe and everything that lives in it. Such a meticulously accurate system cannot come about by sheer coincidence. The reference to the difference in the two great bodies of water suggests that, like every other variation, it is done deliberately. Later on, the section refers to some aspects of this variety in the realm of feelings, values and standards.

The two different bodies of water are shown as united in being subjected to us. *But from each you eat succulent flesh and pull out glitter that you wear. And you will see the boats, that which plows through the waves on it that you be looking for His grace and so that perhaps you will give thanks.* (35:12)

This part concludes on another universal beat that mentions the alternation of day and night, arid the subjection of the sun and the moon to the divine system until their appointed time: *He causes the nighttime to be interposed in the daytime and He causes the daytime to be interposed into the nighttime and He caused the sun to be subservient and the moon. Each runs its course for a term, that is determined. That is God, your Lord. For Him is the dominion! And those whom you call to other than Him possess not even the white spot of a date stone.* (35:13)

LORDSHIP OF THE UNIVERSE

Concluding these inspiring scenes, the section states the truth of God's Lordship over the universe. It also states the falsehood of every claim of partnership with God, and its ultimate and miserable result on the Day of Judgement:

If you call to them, they would not hear your supplication. Even

if they heard, they would not respond to you. And on the Day of Resurrection they will disbelieve in your association with them. And none tells you like One Who is Aware. (35:14)

They are statues, idols, trees, stars, angels or jinn. None of them actually owns the skin of a date-stone. None of them can respond to those who worship them, but, *even if they heard, they would not respond to you.* (35:14) This applies, for example, to the jinn and the angels. The jinn cannot respond, while the angels do not respond to those who have gone astray. All this is relevant to this present life, but on the Day of Judgment they disassociate themselves from error and those who follow it: *And on the Day of Resurrection they will disbelieve in your association with them.* (35:14) This is stated by the One who knows everything in this life and beyond it, who overlooks nothing in the universe now or in the life to come: *And none tells you like One Who is Aware.* (35:14)

So does this passage conclude. It only remains to be said that it gives any human mind enough to last a lifetime. Indeed, it is sufficient for any human heart to listen carefully to a single passage of any section if he is seeking proof and searching for guidance.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 35:8-35:14

WHO IS GOD?

God originated the heavens and the earth. Whoever wants to see the truth of this need only look at the clarity and order in the universe.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quranic message tells the Prophet: Let not your soul be wasted in regret for the ungrateful. God knows what they devise against him.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?

4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message encourages the Prophet not to grieve over the denial of the message by the ungrateful Quraysh. What does great glory (*izzah*), that is repeated twice, mean? The ungrateful idolaters used their idolatry to retain their religious position in Makkah, one which gave them leadership of the Arabian tribes, and which facilitated various privileges. Needless to say, the most important of these were power and great glory (*izzah*).

True *izzah* is not stubbornness that seeks strength through falsehood, or tyranny that uses brutal force to silence others, or an overwhelming upsurge motivated by desire, or a blind force that pays no heed to right and justice. It is none of this. It is the ability to rise above one's own desires, rejecting fetters and humiliations, and refusing to submit to any other than God. It also means submitting only to God, fearing Him alone and obeying Him in all situations. It is through submission to God alone that our heads are raised high, and through fearing Him that we can stand up to whatever He disapproves of. Our watching Him also means that we care nothing for anything other than earning His pleasure. This then explains the relation between the good word and deed on the one hand and might, glory and dignity on the other. We do not know whether each of us is guided to glory or will be going astray. Each of us determine this for our "self."

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to evaluate my ideas based on what I had learned in this lesson.
I was able to then describe why I had these ideas.

After study, you should evaluate your ideas in light of what you have learned, and why you had these ideas.

Those who were ungrateful should not assume that the indulgence We grant to them is better for them. We only grant indulgence to them so that they add sin! For them is a despised punishment. (3:178)

LESSON 43(3). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY EXPLORING THOUGHTS UNDERLYING FEELINGS AND FEELINGS UNDERLYING THOUGHTS

In order to better analyze ourselves, we need to separate our sense of reason from their emotions, our *nafs al-natiqah* from our *nafs al-ammarah* as if we had two opposing parts in our mind. Yet, they are closely connected. Our reason is based on some level of our emotions and our emotions are based on some level of our reasoning. To develop self-understanding, to come to know who we are, we need to understand the connection between the two.

Those who develop Quranic critical thinking come to realize that they are responding to a situation with their feelings (emotions) rather than with their reason (thought).They realize that their feelings would change if they understood the situation in a different way.

THE QURAN CAUTIONS:

It has been found that uncritical thinkers are likely not to see any relationship between their feelings and their thoughts. This allows them to escape any responsibility for their feelings and thoughts and their resulting actions or behavior.

If we tend to base our decisions on our emotions, we need to understand them by asking ourselves the Quranic question: *Do they feel that they want other than the way of life of God* (din) *while to Him submitted whatever is in the heavens and the earth willingly or unwillingly and they are returned to Him?* (3:83)

The Messenger had explored the thoughts underlying his feelings and his feelings underlying his thoughts when he realized that it may not be safe for his followers to remain in Makkah. He advised them to go to Abyssinia. Some went and returned quickly. Who was the ruler of Abyssinia?

The Negus grows up with his uncle, an intelligent and resolute young man. He attains an ascendancy over his uncle to such a degree that when the Abyssinians perceive how great his influence with the king is, they began to fear lest he might gain the crown, and would then put them all to death because he knows that they were the murderers of his father.

Accordingly they go to his uncle and say: Either you must kill this young man or you must exile him from among us, for we are in fear of our lives because of him.

He replies: You wretches, but yesterday I killed his father, and am I to kill him today? But I will put him out of your country.

So they take him to the market and sell him to a merchant for

six hundred dirhams. The latter throw him into a boat and go off with him, but on that very evening the autumn storm clouds mass, and his uncle goes out to pray for rain beneath the mass of cloud when he is struck by lightning and killed.

The Abyssinians hasten in fear to his sons, and lo! he is a begetter of fools. He has not one son who is any good at all. The situation of the Abyssinians become very unsettled. When they fear the pressure of events, they say to one another: Know, by God, that your king, the only one who can put us to rights, is the one you sold this morning, and if you care about your country go after him now.

So they go out in search of him and the man to whom they had sold him, until they overtake him and take the Negus from him. They then bring him home, put the crown on his head, sit him upon the throne, and proclaim him king.

The merchant to whom they had sold him comes and says: Either you give me my money or I shall tell him about this.

They said: We will not give you a penny.

He said: In that case, by God, I will speak to him.

They said: Well, there he is.

So he went and stood before him and said: O King, I bought a young slave from people in the market for six hundred dirhams. They gave me my slave and they took my money, yet when I had gone off with my slave they overtook me and seized my slave and kept my money.

The Negus said: You must either give him his money back or let the young man place his hand in his, and let him take him where he wishes.

They replied: No, but we will give him his money.

For this reason he said the words in question. This was the first thing that is reported about his firmness in his religion and his justice in judgment.

QURANIC CHAPTER 35: THE ORIGINATOR (AL-FATIR)
SIGNS 35:15-35:26

Makkah: *O humanity! It is you*
who are poor in relation to God.
And God—He is Sufficient, Worthy of Praise. (35:15)
If He wills, He would cause you to be put away
and bring a new creation. (35:16)
And that for God is not a great matter. (35:17)
And no burdened soul will bear another's load.

If one who is weighed down calls for help for his heavy load,
nothing of it is carried for him,
even if he had been possessor of kinship.
*Have **you** warned only those who dread their Lord*
in the unseen and performed the formal prayer?
And he who purified himself, then,
only purifies for himself.
And to God is the Homecoming. (35:18)
Not on the same level are the unwilling
to see and the seeing (35:19)
nor are shadows and light (35:20)
nor are the shade and the torrid heat. (35:21)
Nor are the living and the lifeless on the same level.
Truly, God causes to hear whom He wills.
*And **you** are not one who causes to hear*
whoever is in graves. (35:22)
***You** are but a warner.* (35:23)
*Truly, We sent **you** with The Truth,*
a bearer of good tidings and a warner.
And there is not any community, but a warner
passed away among them. (35:24)
*And if they deny **you**, so, surely,*
those who were before them denied.
Their Messengers drew near them with the clear portents
and with the Psalms and the illuminating Book. (35:25)
Again, I took those who were ungrateful.
And how had My disapproval of them been! (35:26)

COMMENTARY°

REPLACEABLE CREATION

O humanity! It is you who are poor in relation to God. And God—He is Sufficient, Worthy of Praise. f He wills, He would cause you to be put away and bring a new creation. And that for God is not a great matter.(35:15-35:17)

We need to be reminded of this truth within the context of God's message, inviting us to accept and follow it, and urging us to abandon the darkness we are in to emerge into the light of His guidance. We need to be reminded that we are in need of God, while He has no need of us. When we are invited to believe in God, worship Him and praise Him for His bounty and favors, we must remember that He has no need for such worship and praise, because He is the Praised One. We are not immune to whatever God wishes of us. Should He wish, He can take us away and replace us by a new creation, either of our own type or of a totally different type. It is all so easy for Him.

EVERYONE ON THEIR OWN

The section then emphasizes individual responsibility, which means that everyone will have what they deserve. No one benefits anyone else in any way. The Prophet has no personal interest in guiding people to the truth. Everyone bears his or her own burden, alone, without help. Therefore a person who seeks to be pure will be the only one to benefit from this endeavor. The matter is ultimately left to God to determine:

And no burdened soul will bear another's load. If one who is weighed down calls for help for his heavy load, nothing of it is carried for him, even if he had been possessor of kinship. (35:18)

The fact of individual responsibility and reward has a decisive effect on morality and behavior. When people are fully aware that they are rewarded according to their own deeds, that none will be responsible for anyone else, and that none can escape responsibility, they realize the need to take stock of their actions before they have to answer for them. At the same time, this is reassuring, because no individual needs to worry about answering for the actions of his community. As long as he has done his duty, giving advice to his community to follow divine guidance, no further responsibility is laid on him. God Almighty does not hold humanity to account for their collective actions. They account to Him individually, each for their own work. It is the duty of the individual to advise others and try hard to bring them into line. Once he has done this, however, he bears no responsibility for their wickedness or corruption. He will he credited for his own good work. Similarly, if he lives in a good community, its goodness will not benefit him if he himself is wicked.

At this point, the section's address is directed to the Prophet: *Have you warned only those who dread their Lord in the unseen and performed the formal prayer.* (35:18) It is such people that can really appreciate the warning: They are the ones who fear God even though they have not seen Him, and who attend to their worship so as to maintain relations with Him. The Prophet is told that these are the ones to benefit by admonition. Others, who have no fear of God, need not worry him.

And he who purified himself, then, only purifies for himself. (35:18) No one receives the benefit of purification except the one who does it. Moreover, purification has pleasant and transparent connotations that apply to one's heart, thoughts, feelings, behavior and attitudes. *And to God is the Homecoming.* (35:18) He is the one who reckons people's actions and rewards them accordingly. Nothing

good or evil is overlooked.

Needless to say, with God belief and unbelief, good and evil, guidance and error cannot be treated on an equal basis. In the same way, blindness and sight, darkness and light, coolness and heat, life and death are unequal. All have essentially different qualities:

The blind and the seeing are not equal; nor are darkness and light; nor the cooling shade and the scorching heat; and neither are equal the living and the dead. *Not on the same level are the unwilling to see and the seeing nor are shadows and light nor are the shade and the torrid heat. Nor are the living and the lifeless on the same level. Truly, God causes to hear whom He wills. And you are not one who causes to hear whoever is in graves.* (35:19-35:22)

At this point the section addresses the Prophet, comforting him and outlining his terms of reference. He is to do what has been assigned to him and leave matters to God. It is He who will do whatever He determines: *Nor are the living and the lifeless on the same level. Truly, God causes to hear whom He wills. And you are not one who causes to hear whoever is in graves. You are but a warner. Truly, We sent you with The Truth, a bearer of good tidings and a warner. And there is not any community, but a warner passed away among them. And if they deny you, so, surely, those who were before them denied. Their Messengers drew near them with the clear portents and with the Psalms and the illuminating Book. Again, I took those who were ungrateful. And how had My disapproval of them been!* (35:22-35:26)

Differences between opposites, whether in the universe or within the human soul, are clear and deeply rooted. Similarly genuine and firm are the differences between people and the way they receive God's message. It all refers to God's will, purpose, wisdom and power. God's Messenger, then, is no more than a warner. His human task is limited to this. He cannot make grave dwellers hear him. Those who live with dead hearts are in the same position: Cold and gravelike. It is God alone who can make hear whomever He wills, in the way He chooses. Why should the Prophet, then, worry about who chooses to go astray, about who turns away from divine guidance. All he has to do is to discharge the duties assigned to him to the best of his abilities. Once he has delivered his message, let people choose whether to respond or not.

In the previous section, God says to the Prophet: *So let not your soul be wasted in regret for them.* (35:8) God sent him, like his brothers the earlier messengers, with the truth. They were many, because: *Truly, We sent you with The Truth, a bearer of good tidings and a*

warner. And there is not any community, but a warner passed away among them. (35:24) If he is met with rejection and people accuse him of lying, this is all in the nature of things, and earlier messengers met the same type of reception, through no fault of theirs, or lack of supporting evidence: *And if they deny **you**, so, surely, those who were before them denied. Their Messengers drew near them with the clear portents and with the Psalms and the illuminating Book.* (35:25) Such evidence could be of various types, including the miracles they demanded or were given to God's messengers in support of their messages. The books refer to whatever different prophets were given of wisdom, directives and admonition. The 'light-giving revelations' refer most probably to the Torah. Yet such communities denied it all.

There was thus nothing new in how the Prophet Muhammad was received. Therefore, the section mentions the fate of earlier communities to warn the new ungrateful: *Again, I took those who were ungrateful.* (35:26) This is followed by a question that gives a sense of gravity and intimates the most horrible of ends: *And how had My disapproval of them been!* (35:26) The condemnation was final, one whereby the ungrateful met their total destruction. Those latter day ungrateful should therefore take the warning seriously and make sure that they do not meet the same fate.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 35:15-35:26

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quranic message says to the Prophet: And **you**, Muhammad, are not one who causes to hear whoever is in graves. **You**, Muhammad, are but a warner. Truly, We sent **you**, Muhammad, with The Truth, a bearer of good tidings and a warner. And there is not any community, but a warner passed away among them. And if they deny **you**, Muhammad, so, surely, those who were before them denied. Their Messengers drew near them with the clear portents and with the Psalms and the illuminating Book. Again, I took those who were ungrateful. And how had My disapproval of them been!

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message continues to comfort the Prophet, seeking to alleviate his distress at the rejection by the ungrateful Quraysh of the message. What is the role of the Prophet in the Quranic perspective? He is a warner and a bearer of good tidings. The Prophet cannot cause those who do not hear who is in the grave to hear. He is only to warn and bring good tidings. The Prophet has two duties: To warn and to bring good tidings. Those who accept the warning choose the good tidings. The Prophet both warned through the revelation that he received and brought good tidings.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

HELPFUL HINTS ABOUT QUESTIONING YOUR FEELINGS

This strategy can be used in the service of developing a sense of justice and courage by exploring your thoughts that underlie your feelings. You can discuss the thoughts underlying passionate commitment to personal or social change.

Raise basic issues to yourself.
Explore beneath the surface of things.
Follow-up problematic areas of feelings.
Discover the structure of your own thoughts and feelings.
Develop sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
Arrive at judgment through your own reasoning.
Note claims, evidence, conclusions, questions-at-issue, assumptions, implications, consequences, concepts, interpretations, and the Quranic point of view.

LESSON 43(4). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
DEVELOPING INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY

The development of an attitude of intellectual curiosity is of prime importance in learning how to become a Quranic critical thinker. Quranic thinkers need to be curious about their environment. They need to seek explanations of apparent discrepancies. They need to speculate as to possible causes of these discrepancies. In short, they need to be predisposed to wonder about the world around them. This sense of wonder, this intellectual curiosity that seeks explanations and proffers solutions, is something that can be and needs to be encouraged and developed.

The Quranic message to journey through the earth is clear, precise and relevant. It is accurate when there are remains of previous civilizations and what happened to them are to be seen. The verses recommending we do this are also worthy of following, logical and fair.

The Quran tells us in these signs to journey through the earth to see what happened to those who came before just as the early Muslims who had migrated to Abyssinia had done.

The first of the Muslims to go to Abyssinia (present day Ethiopia) were:

Abd al-Dar Clan:
Musab ibn Umayr

Abd Shams Clan:
Abu Hudhayfah ibn Utbah
Sahla bint Suhayl ibn Amr one of the Amir ibn Luayy clan, his wife

Adiyy ibn Kab Clan:
Amir ibn Rabiah of Anz ibn Wail, an ally of the al-Khattab family,
Layla bint Abu Hathma ibn Hudhayfah, his wife

Umayya Sub-clan of Abd Shams:
Uthman ibn Affan
Ruqayya, daughter of the Messenger, his wife

Asad ibn Abd al-Uzza clan:
Zubayr ibn al-Awwam

Amir ibn Luayy Clan:

Abu Sabrah ibn Abi Ruhm ibn Abd al-Uzza ibn Abu Qays. Others say it was Abu Hatib ibn Amr ibn Abdu Shams of the same descent. It is said that he was the first to arrive in Abyssinia.

Fihr ibn Malik Clan:
Suhayl ibn Bayda

Jumah Amr ibn Husayn Clan:
Uthman ibn Mazun

Makhzum ibn Yaqza Clan:
Abu Salama ibn Abd al-Asad
Hind bint Abi Umayya ibn al-Mughirah (Umm Salama), his wife

Zuhrah ibn Kilab Clan:
Abd al-Rahman ibn Awf

Zuhrah Confederate:
Abd Allah ibn Masud

QURANIC CHAPTER 35: THE ORIGINATOR (AL-FATIR)
SIGNS 35:27-35:37

Makkah: *Have you not considered that God*
caused water to descend from the heavens?
And, then, We brought out fruits,
the ones of varying hues.
Among the mountains are white and red streaks
—the ones of varying hues—and others raven black, (35:27)
and of humanity and moving creatures and flocks,
thus, they are likewise of hues, ones at variance.
Only His servants who dread God are knowing.
Truly, God is Almighty, Forgiving. (35:28)
Truly, those who recount the Book of God
and performed the formal prayer
and spent out of what We provided for them
secretly and in public,
they hope for a trade that will never come to nothing. (35:29)
He will, certainly, pay them their account in full
as their compensation
and increase them more out of His grace.
Truly, He is Forgiving, Ready to Appreciate. (35:30)

And what We revealed to you of the Book is The Truth,
that establishes as true what was in advance of it.
Truly, God is Aware, Seeing of His servants. (35:31)
Again, We gave the Book as an inheritance
to those whom We favored of Our servants.
Then, of them are ones who are unjust to themselves
and of them are ones who halt between two opinions
and some of them are ones who take the lead
with good deeds by permission of God.
That is the greater grace. (35:32)
Gardens of Eden—they will enter them.
They will be adorned in them
with bracelets of gold and pearls.
And their garments in them will be silk. (35:33)
And they would say: The Praise belongs to God
Who caused grief to be put away from us.
Truly, our Lord is Forgiving, Ready to Appreciate. (35:34)
He Who caused us to live
in the inhabited Abode out of His grace,
fatigue will not afflict us in it, nor will we be afflicted
with exhaustion in it. (35:35)
And those who were ungrateful,
for them will be the fire of hell:
Neither will it be decided a term for them so that they die
nor will its punishment be lightened for them.
Thus, We give recompense to every ungrateful one. (35:36)
And they will shout aloud in it:
Our Lord! Bring us out
and we shall do as ones in accord with morality,
not what we had been doing!
Give We not you a long enough life
so that whoever recollects would recollect there?
And the warner drew near you, so experience it
because there is no helper for ones who are unjust. (35:37)

COMMENTARY°

COLOR IN ALL CREATION

This section is a remarkable touch confirming the source of the Quran. It looks at the entire world with a special focus on color, pointing out its great variety in fruits, mountains, people, animals and cattle. It only takes a few words to group together animate and inanimate objects throughout the earth, leaving us in full amazement at this wonderful exhibition.

It all begins with water being sent down from the skies, and the fruits that it brings forth with their rich variety of hue. Because the exhibition intended here concentrates on visual imagery, the only quality given to the fruits is their color: *And, then, We brought out fruits, the ones of varying hues.* (35:27) The colors of these fruits combine a grading that cannot be reproduced, even partially, by any painter. No two types of fruits are of the same color. In fact, no two pieces of the same type of fruit are identical in color. Good scrutiny will reveal variation even on such a scale.

The section then switches, almost suddenly, to refer to the colors of mountains. A close palette study, however, shows that this is a perfectly natural switch. There is a close similarity between the richness of color in fruits and its richness in mountain rocks. Some rocks may even resemble fruit both in shape and in size, so that they can sometimes be mistaken for fruit. *Among the mountains are white and red streaks—the ones of varying hues—and others raven black.* (35:27) The 'streaks' refer to lines and courses in mountains.

The universe is thus shown as a splendidly colorful book which the Quran opens and looks through. It then says that scholars who read, appreciate and comprehend this book are the ones who have a true God-fearing sense: *Only His servants who dread God are knowing.* (35:28)

Truly, God is Almighty, Forgiving. (35:28) He is certainly able to create all sorts of fine and beautiful creatures, as also to requite people for their actions. At the same time, He forgives much, overlooking the mistakes of those who fall short of appreciating His beautiful work.

THE REVEALED BOOK

Having looked at these pages of the book of the universe, the section turns to the revealed book and those who recite it, their hopes and expected rewards.

Reciting God's book means something other than going through its words, vocalizing them or not; it means reading with reflection that leads to understanding, action and behavior. This also entails attending regularly to prayer, giving secretly and openly in charity, as well as entertaining the hope that what is so offered will never be a failed bargain. Those who do all this know that what God has in store is far more valuable than what they give away. As they give only for God's sake, dealing with Him directly, their bargain is especially .profitable. Ultimately, they will receive their reward in full, coupled with an increase of God's bounty. For, *truly, He is Forgiving, Ready to Appreciate.* (35:30)

This is followed by a reference to the nature of God's revealed book and the truth it contains, as a prelude to speaking about those who are the heirs to this book: *And what We revealed to you of the Book is The Truth, that establishes as true what was in advance of it.* (35:31)

The evidence of the truth in this book is clear in its make up. The Quran is an accurate translation of the universe in its true nature, or we can say that it is the spoken page while the universe is the silent page. Moreover, it confirms the books revealed earlier from the same source. The truth is one; it cannot be multiple. The One who revealed it to humanity knows them well, knows what suits them and improves their lot: *Truly, God is Aware, Seeing of His servants.* (35:31)

Such is this book, and God has given it to the Muslim community as its heritage. He has chosen this community to be its heir, as He states in His book: *Again, We gave the Book as an inheritance to those whom We favored of Our servants. Then, of them are ones who are unjust to themselves and of them are ones who halt between two opinions and some of them are ones who take the lead with good deeds by permission of God. That is the greater grace.* (35:32)

God has honored the community. He has chosen it to be the heir to His message, and He has graced it with a favorable reward, even for those who do not perform well. (35:32)

The group mentioned first, probably because it is the majority, are the ones who wrong their own souls, by doing more bad things than good, and the second have a balance between the two, following 'a middle course,' while the third are 'foremost in deeds of goodness,' having a preponderance of these. However, God's grace is bestowed on all three, leading them all to heaven where they experience the bliss described in the signs that follow. *Gardens of Eden—they will enter them. They will be adorned in them with bracelets of gold and pearls. And their garments in them will be silk.* (35:33)

The Praise belongs to God Who caused grief to be put away from us. (35:34) This present life, with all that it involves of worry about the future and all its struggles, counts as sorrow when it is compared to the enduring bliss in heaven. Moreover, the worry each individual experiences on the Day of Judgement concerning their fate is also a source of great sorrow. *Truly, our Lord is Forgiving, Ready to Appreciate.* (35:34) He has forgiven us our sins and appreciated our work, rewarding us well for it. He Who caused us to live in the inhabited Abode out of His grace. where we shall permanently reside. It is all 'out of His bounty'. We have no right to claim. It is He who gives it all by His grace: *Fatigue will not afflict us in it, nor will we be afflicted with exhaustion in it.* (35:35) There we have all we need:

comfort, bliss and reassurance.

On the other side we see the ungrateful wracked with worry, lacking confidence, and unable to see an end to their troubles: *And those who were ungrateful, for them will be the fire of hell: Neither will it be decided a term for them so that they die nor will its punishment be lightened for them.* (35:36) Not even the comfort of death is granted them. *Thus, We give recompense to every ungrateful one.* (35:36) Then we begin to hear loud, harsh voices. The echoes are mixed, the wailing confused, and it comes from those who have been thrown into hell: *And they will shout aloud in it: Our Lord! Bring us out and we shall do as ones in accord with morality, not what we had been doing!* (35:37) This is an expression of regret for what they did in the past, but it is all too late. Therefore, the reply carries a strong reproach: *Give We not you a long enough life so that whoever recollects would recollect there?* (35:37) You did not benefit from the duration of your lives on earth, which was enough for anyone who wished to heed the warnings. *And the warner drew near you, so experience it because there is no helper for ones who are unjust.* (35:37)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 35:27-35:37

WHO IS GOD?

God is the Originator of the heavens and the earth.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quranic message asks the Prophet: Have **you**, Muhammad, considered that God caused water to descend from the heavens? What God revealed to **you**, Muhammad, of the Book is the Truth that establishes as true what was before it.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

Those who recite the Quran and perform the formal prayer and spend out of what God has provided for them and hope for a trade that will provide them a livelihood, God will pay their account in full.

There are those who are unjust to themselves and ones who are halt between two opinions: right or wrong; and those who take the lead in doing good. Those who take the lead will be rewarded with the Gardens of Eden.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts**

(vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic messages says that God gave the Book as an inheritance to those whom God favored among his servants. Who are the servants of God who have inherited the Quran? They are of three types: Those who are unjust to themselves, that is, wrong their own souls; those who are moderate in choosing right and wrong, that is, the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak; their intentions are good, but they have much to learn of the true life and virtues mentioned in the Quranic message; and, finally, those who lead in good deeds; their intentions and conduct are sound; they form an example to other people; they are foremost in every good deed, by the grace of God. The great reward is for these as opposed to the punishment for the ungrateful. There are various dimensions of the servants of God. Those who are foremost by the grace of God will receive the highest rewards. None of the servants of God are perfect, but some are better than others in terms of following the Quranic message.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I don't waste time. All humans waste some time; that is, fail to use all of their time productively or even pleasurably.

Sometimes I jump from one diversion to another, without enjoying any of them.

LESSON 43(5). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY GENERATING PURPOSE, AIM, GOAL, OBJECTIVE

One of the goals of the Quran is for encourage the oneness of humanity. Others are: to break the bonds of ignorance, missed guidance, social and moral corruption. These are all considered to be shadows or darknesses. When these bonds are broken, the Quran guides humanity to goodness, light and being fair and just.

You begin developing your reasoning or discernment faculty by understanding what this particular element of thought or reasoning is. That is, you learn to generate the purpose, aim, goal or objective of the Quranic signs and their message and those of Prophet Muhammad as we study his life.

One of the characteristics of the Prophet was that he was from among common men. Though this is a term improper a more suitable term does not exist. He was absolutely and purely illiterate. What is training or education? To train means to mold and fashion a personality. What are the factors that are effective in training a human being?

There are five factors that participate in the formation of an individual: First, it is the mother who shapes the first dimensions of the personality of a child. Second, the father. Third; ideology, educational institutions and culture. Fourth: Civilization. Fifth: Essentially the spirit of the period in which you live.

The Prophet of Islam did not enjoy any of these five factors effective in molding an individual's personality. His father died before he was born. This factor is absent. Secondly, immediately after his birth, he was separated from his mother and taken to the desert to be nursed. He remained there for two years. He should have been brought back to his mother after that period, but on account of a plague, before his mother could embrace him he was again taken back to the desert. The plague prevented him from being brought up by his mother. Until the age of five, he neither saw his father nor his mother. At the age of five he was returned to his mother. The mother, who had lost her husband and he was her only child, for the first time took him under her care and intended to take him to Madinah so that he could visit his uncles, her father and her family. The mother of the Prophet belonged to the Najjar Clan of Madinah. But his mother died on the way to Madinah and the child, Muhammad, was left alone in the middle of the desert.

The third factor is civilization, and the Prophet was born among the crudest of the nomadic people of the age. The Arabian Peninsula was also a peninsula from the cultural as well as the geographical

points of view. Geographically it is a peninsula, a piece of land surrounded by water on three sides, but paradoxically not a single drop of water fell on this desert. A dry island. Culturally also it is a peninsula. On the one side Greek civilization, Palestine on the other. On this side Iran and Iraq, and India lies on that side all these civilizations surrounded it, but none of the signs of the surrounding cultures ever penetrated it. Thus, the Prophet grew up in a virgin desert land, bereft of culture and civilization, and was brought up in a virtual cultural vacuum.

The fifth factor time, was under the domination of the Roman culture, Alexandrian culture and Iranian culture. Time was controlled by these cultures. No age or time existed during the seventh century CE in the Arabian Peninsula.

You can see that the Prophet was an individual who was not influenced in the slightest manner by any one of the five factors that play an active role in the training of an individual. He grew up as a completely free being, independent of any influences. It is on account of this that he had an immense capacity to understand and accept new concepts, meanings and values that humanity could not have comprehended. It is for this very reason that he was able to defeat and demolish all the old values and cultures, all the systems of education and training, all the beliefs, and all that was sacred to them. Had he had an opportunity of being trained under any system, he would have been influenced by the existing values of the time.

According to these facts, the Prophet's being illiterate is an indication of the pureness of his being. Age, family, history, culture and moral molding, none of these had the slightest role in his development. For this reason, he could easily comprehend the concepts that were completely unprecedented and revolutionary.

POWER

There are really many peculiarities in the Prophet's life. He would go to the Kabah and offer formal prayer to God instead of to the gods and goddesses that the Quraysh and pilgrims of that time were doing. They wanted to tell him to go away, but did not as he was under the protection of his uncle, Abu Talib.

Later this same person was to write letters to all the superpowers of the age. He wrote to them: In the name of God. Surrender to me, otherwise, what will come to you will be of your own doing. What a tone and a manner! What a great bully! Well, Brother! With what strength? Just now you were turned back by Abu Sufyan and were forced to stop at the gate of Makkah, and you were so helpless that

you had to comply and turn back, as you had no other choice. And now that you have been turned back, on what authority do you write a letter? And in such a manner! It seems that he possesses the strength of a mountain. Otherwise, how could it be possible? He is not deranged. He is a sensible, reasonable man. He has calculated all the pros and cons and he knows very well that the emperor Khusrow Parviz does not need to send a company of soldiers to arrest him. He could have easily asked one of his slaves in Yemen to go and arrest that Arab! And that's what Khusrow did. He did not even send some of his soldiers to Madinah in order to bring him. He asks Bazan his protege in Yemen: Go and see what type of a dreamer is he who behaves so nonsensically. And wrote a letter to me asking me to surrender to him. He could have sent four persons to arrest him, and that would have been enough!

MUHAMMAD: THE FRIEND OF THE OPPRESSED

He is the only friend of the widows, the homeless and the strangers whom he saw in the streets of the city the persons whom nobody greets with a word of "peace", and nobody bothers to return greetings. Sometimes, when passing he sees that these strangers, shepherds and paupers who are seated on the ground have spread a cloth laying their humble meal upon it, consisting of bread suitable for a camel only, they invite him to join them, and he eagerly sits down and shares their food. He sits and chats with them amicably and makes friends with them. He invites them to honor him by coming to his home for supper that evening.

Even while some speak about our Prophet, they judge him by criteria that is contrary to the mission of his prophethood. The Prophet used to sit as a servant sits, used to take his meals as a servant eats; and indeed he regarded himself to be a servant of God. It was not a pretended appearance, but in reality he considered himself to be a servant of God. What a strange thing.

Besides being a social privilege, the Quraysh aristocracy has its own specific symbols. It has its own style of dressing, its own specific decorations, its own means of transportation, its own specific sources of livelihood, its own specific titles all these are the signs of aristocracy, whether it be a king or a sultan, for if you look at the titles of this class, the whole writing space will be filled or it may be the political or a privileged class elite. It makes no difference as to which kind of aristocracy a person belongs.

Whenever one reads the account of his life, the places where he lived, one realizes the one of the characteristics inherent to his nature

Then follows a reminder of individual responsibility. None will be made to bear any part of another person's burden; none will protect another in any way. This sign also refers to their persistent denial of the truth and its ultimate results: *So whoever was ungrateful, then, his ingratitude will be against him. And the ones who are ungrateful increase not their ingratitude to their Lord, but in repugnance.* (35:39) The Arabic word, *maqt*, which is translated here as 'repugnance', indicates the highest degree of hate. If a person incurs God's hate, his loss exceeds all that we can imagine.

Say: Considered you your ascribed associates to whom you call to other than God? Cause me to see what they created in the earth? (35:40)

Or have they any association in creation of the heavens? (35:40) This is even more evident. No one claims that such alleged deities have any part in the creation or ownership of the heavens. Not a single one makes such a claim, not even for the jinn or the angels. All that they can claim is that they sought the jinn's help to bring them news from on high. All they hope for is that the angels will intercede with God on their behalf. Yet at no time did they claim that their alleged deities had a portion of the heavens.

Or gave We them a Book so that they have a clear portent from there? (35:40) Their alleged partners cannot even reach this stage of having a book given them by God and of which they are certain to be true.

The Prophet has a book given him by God which he presents to them. Why, then, are they turning away from it when it is the only source of true faith? *Nay! The ones who are unjust promise nothing—some of them to some others—but delusion.* (35:40) The wrongdoers are quick to promise each other that their methods are the correct ones and that they will eventually prevail. They are indeed deluded. Moreover, they live in worthless delusion.

SUSTAINING THE UNIVERSE

The third round reveals the limitless nature of God's power as He is the One who holds the heavens and the earth and sustains them in place. No one else has any say or role in all this: *Truly, God holds back the heavens and the earth so that they are not displaced. And if they were displaced, there is none who held them back after Him.* (35:41)

The statement that God holds the universe in place ends with the comment: *Truly, He had been Forbearing, Forgiving.* (35:41) He forbears allowing people time. He does not put an end to their world

or hold them to account before the term He has appointed. He gives them chances to repent, begin the good work and prepare for their future lives. Nor does He make people account for everything they do. On the contrary, He forgives much of their wrongdoing when they show any inclination to do well. This statement, then, should make people seize the opportunity provided before it is too late.

The next round speaks about the Arab idolaters and the pledges they made to God, which they then breached, spreading corruption on earth. They are warned that God's laws will always operate, never fail:

The section then reveals what they did when God gave them what they wished for, sending them a messenger to warn them: *Yet when a warner drew near to them, it increased nothing in them but aversion, growing arrogant on the earth and planning evil deeds.* (35:42-35:43)

Needless to say, only a foul people would swear so strongly and then behave with such arrogance and evil. The section exposes them, recording their behavior, before adding to their disgrace a warning to all who emulate such actions: *The plan of bad deeds surround none but people themselves.* (35:43) Thus, their evil will harm none but themselves. It will engulf and ruin them.

This being the case, what are they waiting for? They cannot wait for anything other than the fate that engulfed those who rejected the truth in the past. They are well aware of that fate. Therefore, they can await for nothing other than the operation of God's law which will never change: Then, look they on but a custom of the ancient ones? ***You will never find in a custom of God any substitution. And you will never find in a custom of God any revision.*** (35:43)

IF ONLY...

While they are made to contemplate the fates of earlier communities, whose greater power availed them of nothing, they are reminded of God's might. It is He who sealed the fate of those communities, for nothing can withstand His power: *Journey they not through the earth and look on how had been the Ultimate End of those before them? They had been stronger than they are in strength. And God had not been weakened by anything in the heavens nor in or on the earth.* (35:44) This is a truism which is supported by clear explanation: *Truly, He had been Knowing, Powerful.* (35:44) His knowledge encompasses everything in the heavens and on earth. When His power is added to His perfect and absolute knowledge, nothing escapes Him or stands up to Him. Therefore, nothing in the

universe can foil His purpose. There is no way that anyone can escape His power or hide from His knowledge.

The last sign in the section speaks of God's forbearance and compassion, juxtaposing these with His power and knowledge. It emphasizes that people are given a chance, not punished immediately, but that this does not affect the eventual accurate reckoning of their deeds or the fairness of the results at the end. All this is an aspect of His grace: *And if God takes humanity to task for what they earned, He would not leave on the back of the earth any moving creature, but He postpones to a term, that is determined. And when their term drew near, then, truly, God had been Seeing of His servants.* (35:45)

This highlights the terrible nature of what people perpetrate as a destructive force that could end life in its entirety. However, God does not take people to task straightaway; He forbears and gives them chances: *And if God takes humanity to task for what they earned, He would not leave on the back of the earth any moving creature, but He postpones to a term, that is determined. And when their term drew near, then, truly, God had been Seeing of His servants.* (35:45)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 35:38-35:45

WHO IS GOD?

God knows the unseen of the heavens and the earth. He made us vicegerents on the earth. He holds back the heavens and the earth so that they are not displaced. God had not been weakened by anything in the heavens or in and on the earth. God takes humanity to task for what it has earned.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quranic message tells the Prophet had you, Muhammad, will never find in the custom of God any change nor any revision. The Prophet is to say to the ungrateful: Consider you the associates you call to other than God? Show me what they have created on the earth or in the heavens. Has God given you a Book so that they have a clear sign from there?

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The signs tell the ungrateful that their ingratitude will be against them. They increase their ingratitude to their own loss. They swear an earnest oath that if a warner drew near them, they would follow him. Yet when a warner draws near them, they turn away in aversion. Journey through the earth to see what happened to previous communities.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based

on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message points out that gods that the ungrateful worship have created nothing and are themselves created. Do they have any authority from God to worship their ascribed associates? Some of ones who are unjust promise nothing to others but delusion. It is God who holds back the heavens and the earth so they are not displaced, not the gods that the ungrateful worship. Worshiping other than God increases the arrogance of the ungrateful. The plan of the ungrateful to commit bad deeds surround none but themselves. Only God knows the unseen and what is within our breasts.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

Am I clear about what precisely I am evaluating?;
Am I clear about my purpose? Is my purpose legitimate?
Given my purpose, what are the relevant criteria or standards for evaluation?
Do I have sufficient information about that which I am evaluating?
Is that information relevant to the purpose?
Have I applied my criteria accurately and fairly to the facts as I know them?

LESSON 44(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
CLARIFYING ISSUES OR CONCLUSIONS

When there is a clear question stated about an issue in a Quranic sign, it is important for Quranic critical thinkers to first recognize what is needed to answer, settle or solve it and then evaluate solutions or conclusions. In other words, before you can agree with or disagree with a statement, you must clearly understand it. Quranic critical thinkers first understand the sign(s) and then make a discerning judgment. They then are able to ask the appropriate questions that would lead to understanding and evaluating the situation.

When we clarify the character of Prophet Muhammad, we see that one characteristic indicates that no personage has existed in the annals of history in whose being both strength of character and popularity, at such a high level, were combined together in this way. In a personage of such greatness, which inspires awe, fear, and another quality which fills the heart with a special kind of friendly love for him, has never been integrated with each other. The loveableness of the Prophet is separate from his prophethood. For instance Moses, Abraham and Jesus were also prophets and all of them were loved and respected by their people as prophets of God. But our Prophet Muhammad possessed an additional quality, and that was the compassion of all who came in contact with him. We who know and love the Prophet through his words alone can naturally imagine to what extent those who dealt with him personally, could love him. This dimension of his personality was, in itself such a great force that many of his Companions were greatly affected by his words in such a way that they feared that the Quranic signs reflecting the Prophet's utterances filled their hearts so full that even the words of the Quran might not fit. They were anxious to remember whatever he said. They loved him so much that they memorized his words by heart. His words, his reminiscences, his relics, his memoirs and all that belong to him are ever recounted by the people. All this greatness within all this simplicity seems to be impossible is a miracle in itself. Philosophically, it is to contain the whole world in an eggshell, but this actually became reality.

While sitting in the corner of the Prophet's Mosque, one can imagine the magnificence of the Prophet. What kind of a man was this person? Who was he? What was the extent of his might and strength? Those of you who have fortunately visited this mosque can envision it in your mind. The Prophet's Mosque, both the covered and uncovered area measured 2,100 square cubits. A few houses made of mud in one corner of the courtyard of the mosque, a pulpit

in another corner, a niche at the distance of two three meters. There a small house, here the site of the mosque and the place where he prayed, and in that corner he used to converse with the people. This was the center of his power, the entire domain of his strength, which served as the base of the Quranic message throughout the entire world. This was actually the whole administration he controlled until the time of his death.

When one views that history was made in this small space of ten to twelve meters and all the ancient magnificent powers were humbled to the ground, one has to believe that it was in fact an extraordinary phenomenon. One can feel this miracle and witness it with one's own eyes.

The other specific quality of the Prophet's personality is that in every place of the Arabian Peninsula, which the Prophet visited, we feel a sense of attachment to that land and is attracted to its soil, its pebbles and the mountains thereof. It attracts our heart like a magnet, as if one has entered a magnetic field.[5]

QURANIC CHAPTER 19: MARY (MARYAM)
SIGNS 19:1-19:15

Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:1)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:2)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:3)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:4)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:5)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:6)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:7)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:8)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:9)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:10)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:11)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:12)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:13)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:14)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:15)

QURANIC CHAPTER 19: MARY (MARYAM)
SIGNS 19:16-19:40

Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:16)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:17)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:18)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:19)

Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:20)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:21)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:22)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:23)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:24)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:25)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:26)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:27)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:28)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:29)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:31)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:32)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:33)
Makkah:Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:34)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary and Jesus son of Mary (19:35)

Makkah: *And, truly, God is my Lord and your Lord, so worship Him.*
This is a straight path. (19:36)
There was variance among the confederates,
so woe to those who were ungrateful
from the scene of a tremendous Day! (19:37)
*How well **you** hear! How well will they hear!*
*How well **you** perceive on that Day they will approach Us,*
but today the ones who are unjust
are in a clear wandering astray! (19:38)
*And warn **you** them of the Day of Regret*
When the command would be decided. (19:39)
Truly, We will inherit the earth and whatever is in and on it
and to Us they will be returned. (19:40)

QURANIC CHAPTER 19: MARY (MARYAM)
SIGNS 19:41-19:50

Makkah: Book 26: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (19:41)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (19:42)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (19:43)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (19:44)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (19:45)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (19:46)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (19:47)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (19:48)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (19:49)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (19:50)

Quranic Chapter 19: Mary (Maryam)
Signs 19:51-19:57

Makkah: Book 27: Moses (19:51)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (19:52)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses, Aaron (19:53)
Makkah: Book 26: Ishmael (19:54)
Makkah: Book 25: Enoch (19:55)
Makkah: Book 25: Enoch (19:56)
Makkah: Book 25: Enoch (19:57)
Madinah (19:58)

Makkah: *Then, after them succeeded a succession*
who wasted the formal prayer and followed their lusts.
So they will meet error, (19:59)
but the ones who repented and believed
and did as ones in accord with morality.
For those will enter the Garden
and they will not be wronged at all, (19:60)
Gardens of Eden which The Merciful
promised His servants in the unseen.
Truly, He, His promise had been that which is kept. (19:61)
They will not hear in them idle talk,
nothing but: Peace.
And they will have their provision in them
in the early morning dawn and evening. (19:62)
This is the Garden which We will give as inheritance
to whomever of Our servants who had been devout. (19:63)
And we come forth not but by the command of ***your*** *Lord.*
To Him belongs whatever is in advance of us
and whatever is behind us and whatever is in between that.
And ***your*** *Lord had not been forgetful,* (19:64)
the Lord of the heavens and the earth, and what is between them!
So worship Him and maintain ***you*** *patience in His worship.*
Have ***you*** *known any namesake for Him?* (19:65)

Commentary°

In this scene: *Then, after them succeeded a succession who wasted the formal prayer and followed their lusts. So they will meet error* (19:59) we see only the main features of the role of prophethood delineated.

The previous prophets together with those from among their offspring whom God guided and chose of pious people share a main quality in common: *When are recounted to them the signs of the Mer-*

ciful they fell down, crying, ones who prostrate themselves. (19:58) They are truly God-conscious, very sensitive to what pleases or displeases God. They shudder when His revelations are recited. This sensation is so strong that they cannot express their inner feelings in words. Their eyes are tearful and they fall down prostrating themselves before God and weep.

The section warns those who turned away from the path followed by their God-conscious forefathers, and shows them that they are bound to lose their way and end in ruin. Indeed, their end looms large: *Then, after them succeeded a succession who wasted the formal prayer and followed their lusts. So they will meet error.* (19:59) Disillusion will lead them into error, and error will take them to utter destruction.

The section makes it clear that the door remains wide open for all who wish to repent and mend their ways. Through that door comes the scent of God's mercy and the aura of abounding grace: *but the ones who repented and believed and did as ones in accord with morality. For those will enter the Garden and they will not be wronged at all, Gardens of Eden which The Merciful promised His servants in the unseen. Truly, He, His promise had been that which is kept.* (19:60-19:61)

The section then draws an image of heaven and its dwellers: *They will not hear in them idle talk, nothing but: Peace.* (19:62) Their talk is free of idle remarks, loud noise, futile argument. It is a conversation when only one type of voice is heard. It is the type that fits in with this pleasant atmosphere, full of contentment. That is the voice of peace. Provisions are certain to come in this heaven, without the need for hard work, worry or anxiety. They will never be exhausted: *And they will have their provision in them in the early morning dawn and evening.* (19:62) In such a blissful atmosphere, requests, demands and worries are out of place.

This is the Garden which We will give as inheritance to whomever of Our servants who had been devout. (19:63) Anyone who wishes to share in this inheritance is aware of the way to ensure it: repentance, firm belief and good works. Descent and ancestry are of no avail. Certain people descended from those God-fearing prophets and the goodly people who followed divine guidance and whom God selected for honor, but their descendants neglected their prayers and followed their own wanton desires. Their descent benefited them nothing. They are certain to end in disillusion.

Reports are unanimous that the angel Gabriel was ordered to say the first statement to the Prophet: *And we come forth not but by the*

command of your Lord. (19:64) This was in reply to the Prophet when he felt that revelation was slow in coming. In fact Gabriel had not come to see him for some time, and he experienced a feeling of loneliness, keenly missing the angel whom he loved. Gabriel was then ordered by God to tell him: *And we come forth not but by the command of your Lord. To Him belongs whatever is in advance of us and whatever is behind us and whatever is in between that.* (19:64) He forgets nothing. Revelations are bestowed when He in His wisdom wills that they be bestowed.

The sign ends with the statement: *And your Lord had not been forgetful.* (19:64) It is fitting that this comment should be followed with the injunction to worship God alone and remain steadfast, declaring at the same time His Lordship over all things: *The Lord of the heavens and the earth, and what is between them!* (19:65) No one else has any share in this Lordship.

So worship Him and maintain you patience in His worship. Have you known any namesake for Him?(19:65) and persevere in shouldering the responsibilities that such worship entails.

The command is given to us all that we must *worship Him and maintain you patience in His worship.* He is the only One in the universe who deserves to be the recipient of our worship. The passage concludes with the rhetorical question:*Have you known any namesake for Him?* (19:65) This question also asks whether we know any equal to God. Supreme is He above all things!

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 19:51-19:65

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

It is the command of **your** Lord, Muhammad, that the Gabriel comes forth with the revelation. **Your** Lord, Muhammad, has not forgotten so worship **your** Lord, Muhammad, and be patient in **your** worship of him. Then it asks him: Have **you,** Muhammad, known any namesake for Him?

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

After the previous prophets, there followed a succession of people who wasted their formal prayer and followed their lusts so they met error except those who repented and believed and acted in accord with morality. They will enter the Garden and not be wronged in the least.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts**

(vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message confirms for the Prophet that Gabriel has been sent by the command of God. What did the Quran tell the Prophet when he felt that revelation was slow in coming? The message says: And we (Gabriel) come forth only by the command of **your** Lord. The revelation only comes with the command of God to Gabriel. The word "we" refers to the command of God and the unseen world. Otherwise, it is clear that God is One and the subject would not be "we." The Prophet is reassured that the command is from God because the Prophet would sometime feel that the revelation may not come again

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I thoroughly understand the requirements of the Quranic Studies class, how it is taught and what is expected of me.

I was able to ask questions about the grading policies and for advice on how best to prepare for class?

I feel I was an active learner?

I was able to work ideas into my thinking by active reading, writing, speaking, and listening?

LESSON 44(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY CLARIFYING AND ANALYZING THE MEANINGS OF WORDS OR PHRASES

Critical thinkers of Quranic studies have clear thoughts about the Quranic signs. They perceive the concepts and recognize what kind of evidence is needed to analyze the meaning of Quranic words. They know that just giving a definition is not sufficient. They must also be able to give examples of the Quranic concept.

On the other hand, uncritical thinkers see words drifting through their minds. They are not able to give examples of the concepts of the words or to critique their use of the concept.

God reveals the truth in the Quran in a variety of ways, some explicit and others by allusion, the latter mainly through the modality of the signs, in order to provoke and engage the human intellect. The signs of God cannot be readjusted off the face of the signs, but require thinking and reflection. This is indicated in the phrase: *We shall cause them to see Our signs* ... which suggests that the signs may not be instantaneously visible to the naked eye. The whole concept of the signs seeks to forge a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: It is a blessed Book that We have sent forth to you ... *so that you may meditate on its signs, and those imbued with intuition may recollect.* (38 29) A sign is also a portent and allusion to something other than itself and should not therefore be seen as the final message and purpose of the revelation containing it.

GUIDE: When giving examples and discussing them, you should begin with the clearest and most obvious cases and their opposite. Once your class has discussed them at length can more controversial or difficult concepts be discussed.

> The elders of the Quraysh at the time of the Prophet used to listen to God's revelations being recited to them, but they failed to "hear" the meaning of the words as they would say to the believers who lacked all riches: *Which of the two groups of people is best in station and fairer in alliance?* (19:73) Which side? The elders who denied Muhammad's message, or the humble who responded to him?
>
> Al-Nadr ibn al-Harith, Amr ibn Hisham, al-Walid ibn al-Mughayrath and their powerful clique, or Bilal, Ammar, Khabbab and their brothers, poor and deprived as they were? Had the message preached by Muhammad been any good, would his followers be those who had no power or influence in the Quraysh society? Would they have met in a humble place such as al-Arqam's house? Would his opponents be those who enjoyed all the luxuries and social prominence?

The immediate cause of the revelation of these signs is reported by Khabbab ibn al-Aratt who said: I was an ironmonger, and I had money due to be paid to me by al-Aas ibn Wail. I went to him to demand payment. He said: By God! I am not going to repay you until you reject Muhammad and his message.

I said: I shall not reject Muhammad until you have died and been resurrected.

He said to me: Well! Wait then. For, when I have been resurrected after my death, I will have wealth and children. You can come to me then and I will pay you what I owe you.' God then revealed these signs.

Al-As's words serve merely as an example of the ridicule with which the ungrateful responded to the call of the Quranic message and their derision of the whole concept of resurrection. The Quran highlights the singularity of his claims: *Perused he the unseen or took he to himself a compact from The Merciful?* (19:78)

That would be a good source of information, giving him knowledge of what may happen in that world. *Perused he the unseen or took he to himself a compact from The Merciful?* (19:78) In such a case, he would be certain that God's covenant will be fulfilled. This is followed by an expression of categorical negation which, in Arabic, adds connotations of a prohibition: *No indeed! We will write down what he says. We will cause the punishment to increase for him, prolonging it.* (19:79) He neither attained to any such realm, nor made any covenant with God. He merely rejects the truth and derides its promise.

A further image of warning is added: *And We will inherit from him all that he says and he will approach Us individually.* (19:80) Thus, everything that he speaks about of his wealth and children will be taken away from him, so that he is left with nothing. The Arabic text here gives an image of inheritance, in order to make the deprivation total, just as when an heir takes away all that a deceased person has left behind, discarding nothing. *And We will inherit from him all that he says and he will approach Us individually.* (19:80) He will have nothing of what gave him his standing in society. Thus, he will have no money, property, relatives, followers or supporters as he appears before God all alone, a powerless individual.

Have you, then, considered this person who denies God's revelation, yet speaks about his fortunes on a day when he has no position or influence? It is a day when he will be deprived of all that gave him power in this life. This is just one type of unbelief, false claims and ridicule of the truth.

QURANIC CHAPTER 19: MARY (MARYAM)
SIGNS 19:66-19:82

Makkah: *And the human being says:*
When I am dead, will I be brought out living? (19:66)
Will the human being not remember that We created him
before when he be of nothing? (19:67)
*So by **your** Lord, certainly,*
We will assemble them and the satans.
Again, We will parade them around hell,
ones who crawl on their knees. (19:68)
Again, We will tear out every partisan,
whoever of them was more severe in stubborn rebellion against
The Merciful. (19:69)
After that We are greater in knowledge of those,
they who are most deserving of roasting in it. (19:70)
Madinah (19:71)
Makkah: *Again, We will deliver those who were God-conscious*
and We will forsake the ones who are unjust, in it,
ones who crawl on their knees. (19:72)
And when are recounted to them Our signs,
clear portents, those who were ungrateful
would say to those who believed:
Which of the two groups of people
is best in station and fairer in alliance? (19:73)
How many before them We caused to perish
whose generation was fairer in furnishing
and outward show? (19:74)
Say: Whoever had been in fallacy,
The Merciful will prolong his prolonging for him.
Until when they would see what they are promised,
either the punishment or the Hour,
then, they will know whose place is worse
and whose army is weak. (19:75)
And God increases in guidance those who were truly guided
and endure in accord with morality.
*They are better with **your** Lord in reward*
for good deeds and better for turning back. (19:76)
*Had **you** seen him who was ungrateful for Our signs,*
who said: Will I be given wealth and children? (19:77)
Perused he the unseen or took he to himself
a compact from The Merciful? (19:78)
No indeed! We will write down what he says.

We will cause the punishment to increase for him,
prolonging it. (19:79)
And We will inherit from him all that he says
and he will approach Us individually. (19:80)
And they took to themselves gods other than God
that there be a triumph for them. (19:81)
No indeed! They will disbelieve in what they worship
and they will be taking a stand against them. (19:82)

COMMENTARY°

The passage begins with a scene in which a person is shown to be astonished about the reality of resurrection: *And the human being says: When I am dead, will I be brought out living?* (19:66)

The first point here is that this surprise is attributed to humanity in general. In fact, this same comment was expressed by many peoples during different periods of history. Therefore, it is only normal that it should be attributed to the human kind in general. The surprise, or the objection results from a person's being oblivious of how he came into being. Where and what was he before entering this life? The fact is that he had no existence and then he began to exist. Had the human being remembered this fact, it would have been easier for him to visualize his return to life after death. Therefore, the answer comes in the form of a rhetorical question: *Will the human being not remember that We created him before when he be of nothing?* (19:67)

This denial of the truth of resurrection is followed by an oath implying a stern warning. God, in His glory, swears by Himself, which makes this the most solemn and serious oath, that they will all be resurrected and gathered together. This is, then, a forgone conclusion: *So by your Lord, certainly, We will assemble them and the satans. Again, We will parade them around hell, ones who crawl on their knees.* (19:68) This shows them to be one category with the evil ones who always incite them to deny the truth of faith. Thus the two groups are leaders and followers.

God certainly knows best which people are more deserving of punishment in hell. No one is taken at random, or by chance from that huge multitude. It is God who has brought them here and He knows them all, one by one. He knows what each and every one of them deserves: *After that We are greater in knowledge of those, they who are most deserving of roasting in it.* (19:70) Those, then, are the ones who will be chosen first for the fire.

The believers witness this fearful scene as they too are brought near to it: *There is none of you, but ones who go down to it. This had*

*been a thing decreed, that decreed by **your** Lord.* (19:71) They arrive there, look at hell as it burns fiercely, asking for more feed. They also see the tyrants and the hardened sinners as they are made to enter into it. The believers, however, have a different end: *Again, We will deliver those who were God-conscious and We will forsake the ones who are unjust, in it, ones who crawl on their knees.* (19:72)

Now the section leaves with us this scene of the Day of Judgment to paint an image of this world in which the ungrateful are shown behaving arrogantly towards the believers, branding them as poor and weak, and boasting about their own wealth and petty social values.

These people: *And when are recounted to them Our signs, clear portents, those who were ungrateful would say to those who believed: Which of the two groups of people is best in station and fairer in alliance?* (19:73) have their own social clubs demonstrating all the material values which the wealthy and powerful are keen to emphasize in their corrupt world. By contrast, we see humble gatherings where there are no such material riches or adornments. Instead, there are only the values of faith which unite people in these other groups. The two are juxtaposed so as to fully demonstrate their contrast.

The elders of the Quraysh at the time of the Prophet used to listen to God's revelations being recited to them, but then they would say to the believers who lacked all riches: *And when are recounted to them Our signs, clear portents, those who were ungrateful would say to those who believed: Which of the two groups of people is best in station and fairer in alliance?* (19:73)

The section comments on the boasts of those arrogant ungrateful, speaking proudly about what they enjoy in this life of pleasures and luxuries. The comment draws their attention to how earlier peoples were destroyed, despite the great riches they enjoyed: *How many before them We caused to perish whose generation was fairer in furnishing and outward show?* (19:74) They benefited nothing by all their show, nor were their material privileges of any avail to them when God visited His punishment upon them.

The section then picks up on another type of boast and decries it also: *Had **you** seen him who was ungrateful for Our signs, who said: Will I be given wealth and children? Perused he the unseen or took he to himself a compact from The Merciful? No indeed! We will write down what he says. We will cause the punishment to increase for him, prolonging it. And We will inherit from him all that he says and he will approach Us individually. And they took to themselves gods other than God that there be a triumph for them.* (19:77-19:81)

No indeed! They will disbelieve in what they worship and they will be taking a stand against them. (19:82)

Summary of Signs 19:66-19:82

Who is God?

God delivers those who are God-conscious and forsakes the ones who are unjust. God caused many of those who were ungrateful before to perish. God increases in guidance those who were truly guided and who endure in accord with morality.

How are the signs directed towards the Prophet Muhammad?

Those who are increased in guidance so that they were truly guided and endure in accord with morality are better with your Lord, Muhammad, in reward for good deeds and are better for turning back to God. It asks: Had you, Muhammad, seen those who are ungrateful for God's signs who asked: Will I be given wealth and children? It answers with a question: Did they peruse the unseen or take a compact from The Merciful? It then answers: No, indeed. What they say will be written down and the punishment will be increased for them.

How are the signs directed towards the Community?

The ungrateful ask how it is that when they are dead, they will be brought out living. The message responds: Will they not remember that we created them before when they were of nothing.

Student Assessment

Example of How Critical Thinking Works

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions,** (solve problems, and resolve issues).

Example of How Quranic Critical Thinking Works

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?

8. What is its **Point of View?**

The signs leave the scenes of the Day of Judgment to paint an image of this world in which the ungrateful are shown behaving arrogantly towards the believers, branding them as poor and weak, and boasting about their own wealth and petty social values. The ungrateful ask: *Which of the two groups of people is best in station and fairer in alliance?* That is, the poor who follow the Prophet or they, the wealthy Quraysh who have their own social clubs demonstrating all the material values which the wealthy and powerful are keen to emphasize in their corrupt world. We see humble gatherings where there are no such material riches or adornments. Instead, there are only the values of faith which unite people in these other groups. The two are juxtaposed so as to fully demonstrate their contrast. The wealthy, ungrateful Quraysh are resorting to tribal honor and the importance of wealth and lineage in the leadership of the community. Faith and belief in God and His signs is more important than wealth and family history. Those who are poor and without patrons are praised by God and the Quran. The Quraysh who remain ungrateful for God's signs are trying to hold onto their system of tribal honor whereas the Prophet is bringing a new social order based on faith.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I don't waste time. All humans waste some time; that is, fail to use all of their time productively or even pleasurably.
Sometimes I jump from one diversion to another, without enjoying any of them.
Sometimes I become irritated about matters beyond my control.
Sometimes I worry unproductively.
Sometimes I spend time regretting what is past.
Sometimes I just stare off blankly into space.

LESSON 44(3). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY READING CRITICALLY: CLARIFYING OR DISCERNING THE SACRED TEXT

Critical thinkers read with a healthy skepticism. But they do not doubt or deny until they understand. They clarify before they judge. They expect intelligibility from what they read. Critical readers ask themselves questions as they read, wonder about the implications of, reasons for, examples of, and meaning of the sacred text. They do not approach written material as a collection of sentences, but as a whole, trying out various interpretations until one fits all of the sign or signs, rather than ignoring or distorting statements that don't fit their interpretation.

KNOWLEDGE

According to al-Ghazzali, our beliefs arise from our intellect (*aql*). According to traditional sources, thought is the power of the mind (heart) that facilitates knowledge. Based on this definition, thinking: is the movement of that power that is driven by the intellect. It can only occur when an initial image of the subject is attainable in the mind of the thinker.

Further, the Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the sacred text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge espoused with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression understands the religion, signifying a rational and inquisitive approach to constructing a worldview of Islam. Islam, in other words, advises analytical knowledge and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely dogmatic approach. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions faith based on detailed analysis as opposed to undigested and un-comprehended faith. The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the clerics of all the leading schools of thought....

Thus, if there are hadith reports, or any factual reports for that matter, which do not stand to reason and understanding, they would be most likely discounted and abandoned, with the exception only of devotional matters (*ibadat*) which are based on faith and submission more than on rational analysis....

Another feature of the Quranic vision of thinking is indicated in its emphasis on wisdom and good judgment (*hikmah*) which signifies the quality of thinking, its regard for values, and its outcome. Wisdom and good judgment can easily be said to be more important than technical know-how and expertise, as it can guide expert knowledge as to its proper application and the attainment of excellence.

The Quran mentions *hikmah* twenty times, and in about ten of these it is

immediately preceded by the word kitab, which is a reference to divine scripture—primarily the Quran, but also other divinely revealed scriptures. The text thus says with reference to Jesus that God Most High will teach him the Scripture and wisdom (*hikmah*), the Torah and the Gospel....

The juxtaposition of book and wisdom is often contextualized by a reference to the sending of prophets who teach the people and guide them with scripture and wisdom as it is said of the Prophet Muhammad (as well as) ... the descendants of Prophet Abraham.

The holistic, superior, and indivisible value of *hikmah* in the Quran is underscored in one of its verses to the effect that when God bestows wisdom on someone that person is indeed granted an immense source of goodness.... To mention wisdom together with the Book evidently means that the Quran should be read with wisdom and divorcing the one from the other by taking a totally dogmatic approach to the Quran goes against the divine purpose and intention of its revelation. To read the Quran in the light of wisdom thus means a comprehensive reading that reaches beyond the obvious meaning of its words to encapsulate the goal and purpose of its message and then also reflection on the ways and means of how its benefits can be realized for the individual and society.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO READ AS A CRITICAL QURANIC THINKER?

As can be seen from the writings of al-Ghazzali here, critical thinkers do not doubt or deny until they understand.

Quranic critical thinkers clarify before they judge.
Quranic critical thinkers expect understanding from what they read.
Quranic critical thinkers check and double-check their understanding.
Quranic critical thinkers ask themselves questions.
Quranic critical thinkers wonder about the implications of or reasons for meaning and truth in what they learn.
Quranic critical thinkers learn so that they can ignore whatever does not fit their own personal interpretation or what of their own interpretation will distort what they are learning.

QURANIC CHAPTER 19: MARY (MARYAM)
SIGNS 19:83-19:98

Makkah: *Have you not considered*
that We sent the satans
against the ones who were ungrateful
to confound them with confusion? (19:83)
So hasten you not against them.
We only number for them a sum. (19:84)
On the Day We will assemble

the ones who are God-conscious to The Merciful
like an entourage. (19:85)
And We will drive the ones who sin to hell, herding them. (19:86)
None of them will possess the power of intercession
but such a one who took to himself
a compact with The Merciful. (19:87)
And they said: The Merciful took to Himself a son! (19:88)
Certainly, you brought about a disastrous thing (19:89)
whereby the heavens are almost split asunder
and the earth is split
and the mountains fall crashing down (19:90)
that they attributed a son to The Merciful. (19:91)
It is not fit and proper for The Merciful
that He should take a son to Himself! (19:92)
There is none at all in the heavens and the earth
but he be one who arrives to The Merciful as a servant. (19:93)
Certainly, He counted for them and numbered up a sum! (19:94)
And everyone of them will be ones who arrive to Him
individually on the Day of Resurrection. (19:95)
Truly, those who believed
and did as the ones in accord with morality,
The Merciful will assign ardor for them. (19:96)
So, truly, We made this easy on ***your*** *tongue.*
Certainly, ***you*** *will give good tidings with it*
to the ones who are God-conscious
and ***you*** *will warn a most stubborn folk with it.* (19:97)
How many a generation caused We to perish before them?
Are ***you*** *conscious of anyone of them*
or hear you so much as a whisper from them? (19:98)

COMMENTARY°

The very sound of these signs and their rhythm add to the air of anger at this false claim. In fact the whole universe rejects this claim most vehemently. It shudders and quivers with abhorrence as it hears this falsehood against God Almighty. It is a reaction similar to that of a person who feels that his very integrity is attacked, or that the honesty of someone he loves is assailed. The shudder is common to the heavens, the earth and the mountains. In their beat, the words here show the movement of a violent quake.

As soon as the offensive word is uttered: *Certainly, you brought about a disastrous thing.* (19:89) Everything that is settled and stable is thus shaken. The whole universe is in anger at this false allegation

against God, the Creator. The statement is shocking to everything in nature. The universe is created and functions on the basis of the basic principle of God's Oneness: *Certainly, you brought about a disastrous thing whereby the heavens are almost split asunder and the earth is split and the mountains fall crashing down that they attributed a son to The Merciful.* (19:89-19:92)

In the midst of this universal anger, a clear and definitive statement is issued: *It is not fit and proper for The Merciful that He should take a son to Himself!*

There is none at all in the heavens and the earth but he be one who arrives to The Merciful as a servant. Certainly, He counted for them and numbered up a sum! (19:93-19:95)

Fear creeps into our hearts as we contemplate the significance of this statement by God, the Most High: *Certainly, He counted for them and numbered up a sum!* (19:94) None is forgotten and none will be able to escape. *And everyone of them will be ones who arrive to Him individually on the Day of Resurrection.* (19:95) God watches everyone. They will all come to Him on the Day of Resurrection, each on his or her own. None will have the support or encouragement of anyone else. Indeed, all community feeling is gone, for in front of God, everyone speaks for oneself.

In contrast with this loneliness and isolation, the believers are given a comforting, friendly surrounding: Truly, those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality, *The Merciful will assign ardor for them.* (19:96) The mention of love in this context is bound to comfort and penetrate people's hearts. It is a type of love that spreads in heaven and spills over to fill the earth and comfort people. The whole universe is given a full share of it.

This happy news to the believers and this warning to those who deny the truth and argue against it are the message the Quran gives. God has made the Quran easy for the Arabs to read and understand, as He has put it in His Messenger's own language: *So, truly, We made this easy on **your** tongue. Certainly, **you** will give good tidings with it to the ones who are God-conscious and **you** will warn a most stubborn folk with it.* (19:97)

The section concludes with a scene that we contemplate in our minds for a long time, hardly able to shift our gaze: *How many a generation caused We to perish before them? Are **you** conscious of anyone of them or hear you so much as a whisper from them?* (19:98)

This scene begins with a violent shock before overwhelming us with a total and deep silence. It is as though it takes us to the valley of death to show us how earlier people met their fate. In that great

valley which stretches much further than the eyes can see, our minds imagine the life that used to prosper on earth, the people that moved about everywhere, their feelings, hopes and aspirations. But all that is gone.

Complete silence pervades. For death has overtaken all, leaving only a host of rotting cadavers. Not a single one stirs, not a single sound, not even a breath. *Are you conscious of anyone of them or hear you so much as a whisper from them?* (19:98) Listen as much as you wish. There is nothing but a deadly silence. None remain except the One who never dies. Eternal He is and limitless in His glory.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 19:83-19:98

WHO IS GOD?

God will assemble the God-conscious to The Merciful and will drive ones who sin to hell. None of them have the power of intercession without a compact with The Merciful. It is not fit that The Merciful take a son to Himself. There is nothing in the heavens and the earth but are servants of The Merciful.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quranic message asks: Have **you**, Muhammad, considered that satans were sent against the ones who are ungrateful to confound and confuse them with further confusion. In regard to the recitation, it says: We made the recitation easy on **your** tongue, Muhammad. **You**, Muhammad, will give good tidings to the ones who are God-conscious and **you**, Muhammad, will warn the stubborn folk with it. How many a generation We caused to perish before them? Are **you**, Muhammad, conscious of anyone of them or do **you** hear so much as a whisper from them?

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

There are those who said: The Merciful took to Himself a son! It is not fit that The Merciful should take a son to Himself. Each person will arrive individually to God on the Day of Resurrection.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

In contrast with this loneliness and isolation, the believers are given a comforting, friendly surrounding: Truly, those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality, *The Merciful will assign ardor for them.* Is the mention of love (ardor) in this context to comfort and penetrate people's hearts? It is a type of love that spreads in heaven and spills over to fill the earth and comfort people. The whole universe is given a full share of it. This happy news to the believers and this warning to those who deny the truth and argue against it are the message the Quran gives. God has made the Quran easy for the Arabs to read and understand. God has put the Quran in His Messenger's own language: *So, truly, We made this easy on your tongue. Certainly, you will give good tidings with it to the ones who are God-conscious and you will warn a most stubborn folk with it.* That the believers are comforted by this sign.

Make a list of new vocabulary in these signs. Define them. Look up their Arabic on the internet to include in the list you make.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

You should feel free to raise questions about the meaning of the Quranic signs you read.

You can discuss your interpretations of what you read.

Small groups of you and your classmates can compare their paraphrases and interpretations and write better ones.

LESSON 45(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
LISTENING CRITICALLY: THE ART OF SILENT DIALOGUE

Critical thinkers know that listening can either be done passively and uncritically or actively and critically. This is the case whether you are listening to the Quran in a language you understand or listening to your teacher's lesson. You know that it is not easy to understand what the Quranic text or another person is saying and then to integrate those thoughts into your own.

When we compare speaking and listening, we know that when we speak, we hold on to our own ideas. We are able to arrange them in some order. We express our thoughts with which we are familiar. Listening to another, however is more difficult. In listening, we have to take the words we are hearing and translate them into our own words and ideas for them to make sense. We have not experienced the same things as the speaker. It is difficult to anticipate where the speaker's words are taking them. We have to be attentive to what the other person is saying. All of this requires active listening. Developing into an active listener requires time and practice. It also requires asking key questions.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS ARE SUCH AS:

QUESTIONS: LISTENING CRITICALLY

I'm not sure I understand you when you say ...,
Could you explain that further?
Could you give me an example or illustration of this?
Would you also say ...?
Let me see if I understand you. What you are saying is ....
Is that right?
How do you respond to this objection?

Critical listeners ask questions as they listen in order to better understand what the speaker is saying.

Listening critically means constructing an accurate interpretation of, understanding the elements of thought in, and evaluating, the reasoning of an oral communication. Reading critically means constructing an accurate interpretation of the sacred text, understanding the elements of thought in it, and evaluating, the reasoning of it.

> The Prophet was a man who wielded so much power and might that even when his enemies wanted to abuse him, they would say: He is a Prophet equipped with great morality. People came to him with their smallest problems. A woman opened her heart to him complaining that her husband does not sleep with her. He was so accessible to the people that she comes to the Prophet without having the

slightest idea of his superiority. To whom can you speak to in this manner? You dare not speak of; such trifle matters to the clergy in your neighborhood.

This woman comes and detains the Prophet for an hour. She recounts to him the habits of her husband. She tells him how he is when he comes home; how bad is his mood, what she says, and how he answers; what he said the last night; how many nights he has not slept with her; how he behaves with her; how he supports her, doesn't support her.

He sits patiently, and listens to her in such a manner that she is encouraged to return the next day again. Tomorrow her neighbors also come. The day after tomorrow all the other women come to him. It is obvious that he does not behave in a way that the very first day a person feels that he or she was mistaken, should not have come to him. Till his death no one felt that he or she was mistaken to behave with him in this manner. His firmness, grandeur, greatness and his worldly prestige overwhelmed all those, irrespective of friend or foe who did not see him. But those who saw him, they found in him an intimate, lovable friendly person unlike the great worldly personages who appear little and humble from a distance and dreadful and terrible from near.

An old woman wanted to speak with him. She saw the Prophet emerging from his quarters and came face to face with her. The Prophet felt that she wanted to tell him something. She stopped and waited, when he saw that she would not come forward, he himself went to her. He noticed that she was trembling and tongue-tied. She was over-awed by the Prophet's personality. He came and held her by the shoulders like a child and said: Mother whom are you afraid of ? I am the son of that Qurayshi woman who used to milk sheep. Whom do you fear? This is the new value system that was created by him as he broke the old value system.

QURANIC CHAPTER 20: TA HA
(TA HA)
SIGNS 20:1-20:24

Makkah: *Ta Ha* (20:1)
We caused not the Quran to descend to you
that you be in despair, (20:2)
but as an admonition to him who dreads (20:3)
a sending down successively from Him
Who created the earth and the lofty heavens. (20:4)

The Merciful turned His attention to the Throne. (20:5)
To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens
and whatever is between them
and whatever is beneath the soil. (20:6)
And if you are to publish a saying, yet, truly,
He knows the secret and what is more secret. (20:7)
There is no god but He. To Him belongs the Fairer Names. (20:8)

Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:9)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:10)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:11)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:12)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:13)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:14)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:15)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:16)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:17)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:18)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:19)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:21)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:22)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:23)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:24)

QURANIC CHAPTER 20: TA HA
(TA HA)
SIGNS 20:25-20:54

Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:25)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:26)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:27)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:28)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:29)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:30)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:31)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:32)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:33)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:34)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:35)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:36)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:37)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:38)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:39)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:40)

Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:41)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:42)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:43)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:44)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:45)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:46)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:47)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:48)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:49)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:50)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:51)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:52)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:53)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:54)

QURANIC CHAPTER 20: TA HA
(TA HA)
SIGNS 20:55-20:76

Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:55)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:56)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:57)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:58)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:59)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:60)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:61)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:62)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:63)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:64)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:65)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:66)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:67)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:68)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:69)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:70)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:71)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:72)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:73)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:74)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:75)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:76)

QURANIC CHAPTER 20: TA HA
(TA HA)
SIGNS 20:77-20:89

Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:77)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:78)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:79)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:80)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:81)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:82)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:83)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:84)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:85)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:86)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:87)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:88)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:89)

QURANIC CHAPTER 20: TA HA
(TA HA)
SIGNS 20:90-20:104

Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:90)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:91)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:92)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:93)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:94)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:95)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:96)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (20:97)

Makkah: *Your God is only God Whom there is no god but He.*
He encompassed everything in His knowledge. (20:98)
Thus We relate to you some tiding of what preceded.
*And surely We gave **you***
from that which proceeds from Our Presence
a Remembrance. (20:99)
Whoever turned aside from it,
then truly he will carry a heavy load
on the Day of Resurrection,
ones who will dwell in it forever.
How evil for them on the Day of Resurrection (20:100)
ones who will dwell in it forever;
how evil for them on the Day of Resurrection
will be the load (20:101)
on the Day the trumpet will be blown.
We will assemble the ones who sin,
white eyed on that Day. (20:102)

They will whisper among themselves:
You lingered in expectation but ten days. (20:103)
We are greater in knowledge
of what they will say
when the most ideal of them in tradition says:
You lingered in expectation not but a day! (20:104)

COMMENTARY°

The signs continue with fine touches aiming to comfort the Prophet so that he is not afflicted by those who deny the truth of his message or those who turn away from it. They have their appointed term. He should not attach any importance to the worldly riches they may have been given, because this is all a test which they have to pass.

The Quran is described here as 'a Remembrance', because it reminds us of God, His signs and messages, as well as other signs given to people of old. Those who turn away from this reminder are described here as guilty, and they are shown in a scene from the Day of Judgment. We see them carrying their burdens like a traveler carries his luggage, but theirs are foul, troublesome burdens. When the trumpet is blown to gather all creatures, the guilty come forward with blue faces showing their grief and worry. Terrified, they speak to one another in whispers. They cannot raise their voices. All this describes the fear that overwhelms them at that moment when all the dead are raised. But what is the subject of their whispers? They simply try to guess the duration of their life on earth, for that life has become so short in their view that they imagine it to have lasted only a few days. Some of them say: *They will whisper among themselves: You lingered in expectation but ten days.* (20:103)

However, those with a better judgement and a more accurate view feel life on earth to have been much shorter than that. They tell the others: *You lingered in expectation not but a day.* (20:104) Thus, their life on earth, with all its pleasures, comforts, grief and worries, shrinks into insignificance. It lasted only a brief period of time, and was of little value to anyone. For what is the value of ten days, even when they bring all sorts of happiness and enjoyment? And what price may be attached to one night, even though its every minute was one of pleasure and happiness? How could these compare with the endless time which awaits them after the Day of Resurrection?

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 20:90-20:104

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The signs give fine touches aiming to comfort the Prophet so that he is not afflicted by those who deny the truth of his message or those who turn away from it. They have their appointed term. He should not attach any importance to the worldly riches they may have been given, because this is all a test which they have to pass.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The Quran is described here as 'a reminder', because it reminds us of God, His signs and messages, as well as other signs given to people of old. Those who turn away from this reminder are described here as guilty, and they are shown in a scene from the Day of Judgment. We see them carrying their burdens like a traveler carries his luggage, but theirs are foul, troublesome burdens. When the trumpet is blown to gather all creatures, the guilty come forward with blue faces showing their grief and worry. Terrified, they speak to one another in whispers. They cannot raise their voices. All this describes the fear that overwhelms them at that moment when all the dead are raised. But what is the subject of their whispers? They simply try to guess the duration of their life on earth, for that life has become so short in their view that they imagine it to have lasted only a few days.

GUIDE TO LISTENING CRITICALLY

Listen carefully to what the Quranic signs are saying.
Take them seriously.
Look for reasons and evidence among them.
Recognize and reflect on any assumptions.
Discover implications and consequences.
Seek examples and analogies to them.
Seek to distinguish what one knows from what one merely assumes.
Seek to enter empathetically into the perspectives of others.
Be on the alert for inconsistencies, vagueness and other possible problems in thought in your classroom discussions.
Maintain a healthy sense of skepticism.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic signs comfort the Prophet so that he is not afflicted by those who deny the truth and turn away from it. How long will it seem this life lasted on the Day of Resurrection? Those with a better judgement and a more accurate view feel life on earth to have been short. They tell the others: *You lingered in expectation not but a day.* (20:104) Thus, their life on earth, with all its pleasures, comforts, grief and worries, shrinks into insignificance. Life on earth lasted only a brief period of time, and was of little value to anyone. What is the value of ten days? There is no value to life on this earth even if it brings all sorts of happiness and enjoyment. What price may be attached to one night, even though its every minute was one of pleasure and happiness in comparison with the endless time which awaits them after the Day of Resurrection?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to study and learn skills that I had not been good at.
I practice these skills whenever possible.
I am able to recognize and correct your weaknesses because I know this is a sign of gaining strong thinking skills

LESSON 45(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
RAISING QUESTIONS, ISSUES

Critical thinkers constantly ask themselves questions. Take the example of al-Ghazzali who writes in *Deliverance from Error*:

So I began by saying to myself: What I seek is knowledge of the true meaning of things. Of necessity, therefore, I must inquire into just what the true meaning of knowledge is.

Then it became clear to me that sure and certain knowledge is that in which the thing known is made so manifest that no doubt clings to it, nor is it accompanied by the possibility of error and deception, nor can the mind even suppose such a possibility. Furthermore, safety from error must accompany the certainty to such a degree that, if someone proposed to show it to be false—for example, a man who would turn a stone into gold and a stick into a snake —his feat would not induce any doubt or denial. For if I know that ten is more than three, and then someone were to say: No, on the contrary, three is more than ten, as is proved by my turning this stick into a snake—and if he were to do just that and I were to see him do it, I would not doubt my knowledge because of his fear. The only effect it would have on me would be to make me wonder how he could do such a thing. But there would be no doubt at all about what I knew!

I realized, then, that whatever I did not know in this way and was not certain of with this kind of certainty was unreliable and unsure knowledge, and that every knowledge unaccompanied by safety from error is not sure and certain knowledge.

I then scrutinized all my cognitions and found myself devoid of any knowledge answering the previous description except in the case of sense-data and the self- evident truths. So I said: Now that despair has befallen me, the only hope I have of acquiring an insight into obscure matters is to start from things that are perfectly clear, namely sense-data and the self-evident truths. Hence I must first study these thoroughly in order to reach a sure answer to these questions: Is my reliance on sense-data and my safety from error in the case of self-evident truths of the same kind as that which I formerly had regarding the dicta of authority, and of the same kind as that which most men have regarding speculative matters? Or is it a verifiable safety containing no deception or danger?

With great earnestness, therefore, I began to reflect on my sense-data to see if I could make myself doubt them. This protracted effort to induce doubt finally brought me to the point where my soul would not allow me to admit safety from error even in the case of my sense-data. Rather it began to be open to doubt about them and to say: Whence comes your reliance on sense-data? The strongest of the senses is the sense of sight. Now this looks at a shadow

and sees it standing still and motionless and judges that motion must be denied. Then, due to experience and observation, an hour later it knows that the shadow is moving, and that it did not move in a sudden spurt, but so gradually and imperceptibly that it was never completely at rest. Sight also looks at a star and sees it as something small, the size of a dinar: then geometrical proofs demonstrate that it surpasses the earth in size. In the case of this and of similar instances of sense-data the sense-judge makes its judgments, but the reason-judge refutes it and repeatedly gives it the lie in an incontrovertible fashion.

The Quranic text asks hundreds of questions in reasoning something out. There are many issues that end with a question, many rhetorical, the answer to which the Quranic message itself implies. One of the best ways to become critical thinkers is to reflect on the Quranic questions and understand the questions that the Quran asks.[6]

QURANIC CHAPTER 20: TA HA (TA HA) SIGNS 20:105-20:115

Makkah: *And they will ask you*
about the mountains.
Then, say: My Lord will scatter them
a scattering. (20:105)
Then, He will forsake it as a leveled spacious plain. (20:106)
Then, you will see not in it any crookedness
nor unevenness. (20:107)
On that Day they will follow one who calls.
There will be no crookedness in him.
And voices will be hushed for
The Merciful so you will hear nothing
but a murmuring. (20:108)
On a Day intercession will not profit anyone
but him to whom gave permission The Merciful
and with whose saying He was well-pleased. (20:109)
He knows what is in advance of them and what is behind them
and they will not comprehend Him in knowledge. (20:110)
And faces will be humbled before The Living, The Eternal
while, surely, will be frustrated whoever
was burdened by doing injustice. (20:111)
Whoever does as the one in accord with morality
and he is one who
believes, then, he will neither fear injustice
nor unfairness. (20:112)
And, thus, We caused it to descend as an Arabic Recitation.

And We diversified the threats in it
so that perhaps they will be God-conscious or cause
the Remembrance to be evoked by them. (20:113)
Then, exalted be God, The True King,
and hasten not the Recitation
before its revelation is decreed to you.
And say: My Lord! Increase me in knowledge! (20:1114)
And, certainly, We made a compact with Adam before.
Then, he forgot and We find no constancy in him. (20:115)

COMMENTARY°

This section begins and ends with an address to the Prophet explaining his task and outlining the limits of his duties. It is not a mission of distress that has been imposed on him, nor is it an affliction which he has to endure. It is a mission of advocacy and admonition, giving good news and warning against wrongdoing. The ultimate judgement over people is exercised by God, the One, who has no partners, and who controls the whole universe, with all that appears of it and what remains hidden. God is the One who is fully aware of all hearts' secrets, and to whom all people prostrate. It is to Him that all people, obedient and sinners, refer. Therefore, the Prophet should not be bothered by whoever chooses the path of unbelief. He should not be distressed over their denial of the truth.

The section started with a discussion on the Quran, making it clear that the purpose of its revelation to the Prophet Muhammad was not that he might be afflicted by it. Part of the Quran covers the story of Moses and how it reflects the care God took of Moses, his brother Aaron and their people. Now that the story has been told, the section resumes speaking about the Quran, the role it is intended to play and the fate which is bound to be suffered by those who turn their backs to it. This fate is shown in a scene of the Day of Judgment in which the days of this present life are seen to be infinitesimal, the earth loses its mountains and is seen flat and bare; sounds are hushed before God the Merciful; and faces are humbled before God, the Ever-Living. This scene, and the warnings made in the Quran, are intended to arouse feelings of God-consciousness, reminding people of their relationship with God. This passage concludes by giving the Prophet renewed comfort with respect to the Quran which was being revealed to him. He must not hasten to repeat its words during the process of receiving it as he used to do fearing that he might forget some parts of it. He need not entertain any such fear, because God has taken it upon Himself to preserve the Quran and make it easy for

recitation and study. In this context, the Prophet is instructed to pray to God to give him more knowledge.

Since the Prophet was keen to repeat the Quranic revelations as they were given to him, for fear of forgetting them, the section mentions how Adam forgot God's covenant. This is followed by the declaration of hostility between him and Satan, stating the different ends of the people who remember their covenant with God and those who forget it. These two different ends are shown in one of the scenes of the Day of Resurrection the Quran portrays, as though the Day gives the end of the journey which started in heaven and aims to return there.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 20:105-20:115

WHO IS GOD?

The only intercession that will be accepted is with the permission of The Merciful. God knows what is in advance of us, what is behind us and we cannot comprehend Him in knowledge. True knowledge is imported by God. It is a knowledge that lingers, bringing benefits, yielding good fruits and is never wasted.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Prophet need not hasten to repeat the words of the revelation because God has sent it down for a specific purpose and He will not allow it to be lost. The Prophet just needs to continue to pray to God to increase him in knowledge, reassured that what he is given will not be taken away.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

Faces on that Day will be humbled before The Living, The Eternal. Whoever was burned by injustice will be burdened on that Day by what he has done. Whoever acted in accord with morality and is one who believes will neither fear injustice nor unfairness.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message tells the Prophet that he does not have to hasten to repeat the words of the revelation to him. Was some of the signs of the Quran left out or forgotten by the Prophet? The Quran assures the Prophet that God will not allow any of the revelation to be forgotten. God has sent down the Quranic revelation for a specific purpose and He will not allow it to be lost. The Quran is an Arabic recitation sent originally to Arabic-speaking people. The revelation tells the Prophet that all he needs to do is to pray to God to increase him in knowledge, reassured that what God has given him will not be taken away. There were times when the Prophet was concerned that some of the revelation may be lost if he did not continuously repeat it to himself.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I loved learning how to ask questions.
I was able to ask questions in class.
I incorporated questions into my papers.
I realized that 1/6th of the Quran are questions.
I hope to study them and learn more about them over time.

LESSON 45(3). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY PRACTICING DISCUSSION: CLARIFYING AND QUESTIONING INTERPRETATIONS

Critical thinkers are questioners. The ability to question and probe deeply, to get down to root ideas, to get beneath the mere appearance of things, is at the very heart of this strategy. Furthermore, critical thinkers are comfortable being questioned. They actually welcome questions. They don't become offended, confused, or intimidated. They welcome good questions as an opportunity to develop a line of thought.

There are many different kinds of questions and moves available to you. Your teacher can use questioning techniques to learn what you and your classmates think, helping you develop your ideas, or as a prelude to evaluation. When confronted with a new idea, you want to understand it, to relate it to your experience, and to determine its implications, consequences, and value. You can fruitfully uncover the structure of your own and others' perspectives. Probing questions are the tools by which these goals are reached.

Quranic critical thinkers are never without questions to ask as the Quranic continuously ask. It is through exploring questions that the sacred text is able to clarify interpretations. Through their questioning, students explore the basic ideas. Going beyond what things appear to be, they not only study Quranic questions, but are able to ask many more themselves.

> Thinking about God's purpose in sending Prophet Muhammad extremely difficult and awe inspiring. A great personage like Ali ibn Abi Talib said: Whenever we found the situation to be grave, we used to take refuge in the Prophet of God and sought the shelter of his presence in order to feel safe and protected in his loving company. How sublime and lofty was the personality of this great man. It is quite natural that our limited and little minds are unable to realize this greatness. The tools and criteria that we have to evaluate and measure men by, fail to assess and understand such a great being. Hence, we are compelled to understand him within the limits imposed on our intellects.

QURANIC CHAPTER 20: TA HA
(TA HA)
SIGNS 20:116-20:128

Makkah: Book 25: Adam (20:116)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam (20:117)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam (20:118)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam (20:119)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam (20:120)

Makkah: Book 25: Adam (20:121)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam (20:122)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam (20:123)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam (20:124)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam (20:125)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam (20:126)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam (20:127)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam (20:128)

QURANIC CHAPTER 20: TA HA
(TA HA)
SIGNS 20:129-20:135

Makkah: *And if a Word preceded not from your Lord*
for a term that was determined,
it would be close at hand. (20:129)
Madinah (20:130)
Madinah (20:131)
Makkah: *And command **you** people*
to the formal prayer,
and to maintain patience in it.
*We ask not of **you** for any provision.*
*We provide for **you***
and the Ultimate End will be
for the God-conscious. (20:132)
And they said: Why brings he not to us
a sign from his Lord?
Approaches them not clear portents
that were in the first scrolls? (20:133)
And if We caused them to perish with a punishment before this,
certainly, they would have said:
*Our Lord! Why had **You** not sent to us*
*a Messenger so that we follow **Your** signs before we are*
degraded and humiliated! (20:134)
Say: Each is one who is waiting so watch.
Then, you will know
who are the Companions of the Path without fault
and who were truly guided. (20:135)

COMMENTARY°

The section now moves us along to look at how earlier communities met their fate, which is much closer to us than the Day of Judgment. Moreover, we can see their destruction and what is left of them

with our own eyes, while we cannot see resurrection.

When we look with our eyes and minds at the fate of earlier communities; when we look closely at the lands were they lived and prospered; when we imagine their dwellings and how they became empty with no one living in them; when we stretch our imagination to see them walking through their lands, going here and there, moving along, taking rest, looking to their futures, dealing with their worries, and then open our eyes to see nothing but emptiness, we realize that we are at the edge of a precipice that threatens to engulf us like it did earlier communities. We know that the great power that overwhelmed earlier generations is able to overwhelm the present ones as well. We understand then the meaning of the warning given to us, because the lesson is there for us to see. How come, then, that people do not recognize divine guidance when the fate of earlier generations provides every guiding indication to anyone who has a mind to use: *Truly, in this are signs for the people imbued with sense.* (20:128)

Divine wisdom has willed that God will not eliminate them by a calamity that befalls them in this present world. This is the reason why they do not meet a similar fate. This is a situation God has decreed, giving them respite up to a term appointed for them. Otherwise they too would have been punished for their rejection of the truth: *And if a Word preceded not from your Lord for a term that was determined, it would be close at hand* (20:129)

And command your people to the formal prayer. (20:132) The first duty of a Muslim is to make his home a Muslim home, enjoining his family to attend to their prayers so that they all maintain their ties with God. Thus, they are united in their approach to life. Life in a home where all members turn to God for worship is certainly a happy one. *And maintain patience in it.* (20:132) Be diligent so that you offer your prayers complete and its effect becomes a reality. Formal prayer restrains us from loathsome deeds and indecency. This is its true effect. To attain the level where prayer provides such restraint requires diligence in its observance. Unless we reach the stage that our prayer yields this fruit, it remains a mere sequence of phrases and movements.

Prayer and worship generally are duties assigned to the Prophet and believers. God does not gain anything by them. He is in need of no one: *We ask not of you for any provision.* (20:132) Worship nurtures God-consciousness within the worshipper. Therefore: *We provide for you and the Ultimate End will be for the God-conscious.* (20:132)

As the section draws to its close, it refers again to those people

who, enjoying position and power, reject God's revelations and demand that the Prophet deliver a miracle. They make such demands even after the Prophet has given them the Quran which explains in all clarity what previous messages from God were like. *And they said: Why brings he not to us a sign from his Lord? Approaches them not clear portents that were in the first scrolls?* (20:133) They need no physical miracle. Therefore, their demands betray their arrogance. The Quran is more than sufficient as proof. It links the new message with God's previous messages, uniting them all and clarifying what was left in general terms in previous messages. God has given those who deny the truth everything they need to recognize the truth and believe in it when He sent them His last Messenger: *And if We caused them to perish with a punishment before this, certainly, they would have said: Our Lord! Why had **You** not sent to us a Messenger so that we follow **Your** signs before we are degraded and humiliated!* (20:134)

At the time when this sign was recited, they had been neither humiliated nor disgraced. The sign describes their inevitable end which will bring them humiliation and disgrace. It may be that they will then say: *Our Lord! Why had **You** not sent to us a Messenger so that we follow **Your** signs before we are degraded and humiliated!* (20:134). As the section describes their end, the Prophet is commanded to leave them alone, without grieving for them. He should announce to them that he will await the end, and let them await it as they wish: *Say: Each is one who is waiting so watch. Then, you will know who are the Companions of the Path without fault and who were truly guided.* (Verse 135) Thus the section ends.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 20:129-20:135

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quran tells the Prophet to command people to the formal prayer (*al-salat*) and maintain patience in it. God asks of **you**, Muhammad, no provision, but God provides for **you**, Muhammad. He is told to say to the ungrateful who refuse to accept the message and who asked why God had not sent a Messenger to them with clear signs before they were degraded and humiliated on the Day that each is one that is waiting, so watch. Then you will know who are the Companions of the Path without fault and who were truly guided.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts**

(vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message says that the ungrateful will ask on the Day of Judgment why a Messenger was not sent to them with clear signs before they were humiliated and debased. Do not clear signs approach them that were also in the first scrolls? The Messenger is before them giving them the message, but they deny it. They will have no cause to ask this question on the Day of Judgment as they have been denying what they were asking for. The Quran is a reminder and an admonition for those who may benefit from it. The Quran is being revealed from the Messenger of God to the people. When the Prophet completes conveying the message, the only thing that remains is to wait for the end which is determined by God. The ungrateful continue to deny the message.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities: I am able to do the following:

Discover a multiple of ways to ask questions that explore the logic of what we are reading, hearing or thinking.
Explore and question assumptions, judgments, inferences, what may appear to be contradictory or inconsistent.
Question the relevance of what we are studying.
Probe the evidence for and against what others say.

LESSON 46(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY REASONING DIALOGICALLY: COMPARING INTERPRETATIONS

Dialogical thinking refers to thinking that involves a dialogue or extended exchange between different points of view. Whenever we consider concepts or issues deeply, we naturally explore their connections to other ideas and issues within different domains or points of view. Critical thinkers need to be able to engage in fruitful, exploratory dialogue, proposing ideas, probing their roots, considering subject matter insights and evidence, testing ideas, and moving between various points of view. When we think, we often engage in dialogue, either inwardly or aloud with others. We need to integrate critical thinking skills into that dialogue so that it is as fruitful as possible. Questioning is one form of dialogical thinking.

Reasoning dialogically means using a thinking that involves a dialogue between different points of view as the Quranic example shows. Deeply explore the connections to the ideas expressed in these Quranic signs. You should be guided to first engaging in an exploratory dialogue where you study the ideas, explore the roots of these ideas, consider the evidence of the subject matter testing the ideas as you move between multiple points of view. You should engage in an inward dialogue with yourself or an outward one with others. You need to learn how to integrate the Quranic critical thinking skills with your dialogue.

> When we compare the points of view between a king and our beloved Prophet, we see that with all his greatness, while he enters his house, his wife sees in his countenance an ordinary good husband alone. What kind of a person he is that outside his home, tribal chieftains are afraid of him, he is tough and wields so much power and has such a great spirit. But, as he enters his house, his wife, the same woman who used to fear their husbands and fathers used to see his great compassion
>
> According to the narrations of Abu Hurayrah, month after month passes and no smoke rises out of his kitchen. When they wished to be indulged in luxury, they used to take seeds of the dates and knead them with dates (even then no cooking!) till they were softened. He too liked them very much, and whenever he wanted to fill his stomach lavishly, he ate them. This was the kind of life, house, and furniture he had.
>
> What kind of a home did the Prophet have? It was a room made of mud, which he built himself. Half of the room was covered by a mat and the remaining by sand. The sand was brought from the desert and changed every few days, so that it would not become dirty. This all the furniture that this great man, chosen by God to deliver His message, possessed.

QURANIC CHAPTER 56: THE INEVITABLE (AL-WAQIAH) SIGNS 56:1-56:38

Makkah: *When The Inevitable came to pass,* (56:1)
its descent is not like that which lies. (56:2)
It will be one that abases, one that exalts. (56:3)
When the earth will rock with a rocking (56:4)
and the mountains be crumbled to dust, crumbling, (56:5)
then, they had been dust scattered about. (56:6)
And you had been of three diverse pairs. (56:7)
Then, the Companions of the Right—
who are the Companions of the Right? (56:8)
And the Companions of the Left—
who are Companions of the Left? (56:9)
Ones who take the lead are the ones who take the lead. (56:10)
Those are the ones who are brought near (56:11)
in the Gardens of Bliss. (56:12)
A throng of the ancient ones (56:13)
and a few of the later ones (56:14)
are on lined couches, (56:15)
ones who are reclining on them,
ones who are facing one another. (56:16)
Immortal children go around them (56:17)
with cups and ewers and goblets from a spring of water. (56:18)
Neither will they suffer headaches
nor will they be intoxicated, (56:19)
and sweet fruit of what they specify (56:20)
and the flesh of birds for which they lust (56:21)
and most beautiful eyed ones, (56:22)
like the parable of the well-guarded pearls, (56:23)
a recompense for what they had been doing. (56:24)
They will not hear any idle talk in it
nor accusation of sinfulness, (56:25)
but the saying of: Peace! Peace! (56:26)
And the Companions of the Right
—who are the Companions of the Right? (56:27)
They will be among thornless lote-trees (56:28)
and acacias, one on another, (56:29)
and spread out shade (56:30)
and outpoured water (56:31)
and many sweet fruit. (56:32)
There will be neither that which is severed

nor that which is inaccessible. (56:33)
And it is an exalted place of restfulness. (56:34)
Truly, We caused them (f) to grow, a good forming, (56:35)
and made them (f) virgins, (56:36)
full of love, of the same age, (56:37)
for the Companions of the Right. (56:38)

COMMENTARY°

UNFINISHED CONDITIONAL

This opening is clearly intended to add suspense to its presentation of this awesome but inevitable event. It employs a special style that clearly indicates this. Twice, it begins a conditional sentence, employing the word when, without finishing what the result or the outcome will be. It first says: *When The Inevitable came to pass, its descent is not like that which lies. It will be one that abases, one that exalts.* (56:1-56:3)

But it does not say what will take place when this inevitable event comes to pass. It simply says there can be no denying that it will happen. Without saying what comes next, the section commences a new beginning with another conditional sentence: *When the earth will rock with a rocking and the mountains be crumbled to dust, crumbling, then, they had been dust scattered about.* (56:4-56:6)

This special style particularly suits the extremely frightening image the section opens with. The section denotes the event of resurrection by the term *al-waqiah*, which primarily refers to something that falls hard. The very sound of the word gives the impression of a heavy object dropping from a high position and then settling where it cannot be moved or removed: *Its descent is not like that which lies.* (56:2) This expectation is fulfilled as the event is described as abasing [some] exalting [others]. *It will be one that abases, one that exalts.* (56:3)

THREE GROUPS

As this strongly shaking scene concludes, we are then introduced to the effects of this inevitable event as some people are elevated while others are abased. This takes place when everyone faces their different fate: *And you had been of three diverse pairs. Then, the Companions of the Right—who are the Companions of the Right? And the Companions of the Left—who are Companions of the Left? Ones who take the lead are the ones who take the lead.* (56:7-56:10)

Here, people are divided into three groups, unlike in most other Quranic statements where they are shown to be in two groups. The

section first mentions the people of the right side, but does not give us any details about them. Instead, a question is asked about them, enhancing the feeling of expectation: *Then, the Companions of the Right—who are the Companions of the Right?* (56:8) The same method is used for the opposite group: *And the Companions of the Left—who are Companions of the Left?* (56:9) The third group is then mentioned, and these are the ones to the fore. They are described by the same quality of being ahead of all:

Ones who take the lead are the ones who take the lead. (56:10) It is as if the section says these are the ones, and this is enough. No further description is necessary, it would add nothing.

The section then mentions their position with their Lord and describes in detail what blessings He has prepared for them. This is all described in a way that the addressees can understand, in light of their own knowledge and experience.

The section begins this detailed account by mentioning the greatest aspect of their elevated position, the bliss of being close to their Lord: *Those are the ones who are brought near in the Gardens of Bliss.* (56:11-56:12) The gardens of bliss, with all that they contain, is nothing compared to that topmost favor of being nearest to God.

The section takes a short pause here to say who achieves this grade. Thus, we are told: *A throng of the ancient ones and a few of the later ones.* (56:13-56:14) They are, then, the chosen ones, constituting a limited number.

Now the section begins to enumerate the types of luxuries they will enjoy in heaven. These are of course of the types they can imagine and visualize. Beyond these there are other luxuries and aspects of happiness and bliss, which they will recognize when they are ready to appreciate them in their future lives. These are things no eye has ever seen, no ear has ever heard of and no mind has ever imagined.

[They] *are on lined couches, ones who are reclining on them, ones who are facing one another.* (56:15-56:16) They are comfortable, free of all worries and preoccupations, reassured as to the continuity of their happiness, knowing that it will never end. *Ones who are reclining on them, ones who are facing one another.* (56:15-56:16) Therefore, they come together, in an atmosphere of mutual love. *Immortal children go around them.* (56:17) These youths are unaffected by the passage of time; they retain their youthful looks. They go round carrying goblets .... *with cups and ewers and goblets from a spring of water.* (56:18) Their drink is made of pure wine that causes no intoxication. *Neither will they suffer headaches nor will*

they be intoxicated. (56:19) They are not turned away from it, nor will it ever be used up. Everything here is always plentiful; nothing is ever out of stock. *And sweet fruit of what they specify and the flesh of birds for which they lust and most beautiful eyed ones, like the parable of the well-guarded pearls.* (56:20-56:23)

Hidden pearls are those that are carefully treasured. No hand has ever put a needle through them, and no eye has ever cast a piercing look at them. A host of gentle connotations, both mental and physical, are implied in this description of these companions with their large beautiful eyes. All this is a reward for what they used to do. *A recompense for what they had been doing.* (56:24) It is a reward for what is done during that stage of life where action is required. In that life, nothing people do attains perfection, but here in this life, in heaven, the reward is absolutely perfect.

Moreover, they are greeted gently in a way that disdains all idle talk: *They will not hear any idle talk in it nor accusation of sinfulness, but the saying of: Peace! Peace!* (56:25-56:26) Their lives are peaceful; peace that spreads all around them. They are saluted by the angels with a greeting of peace, and they exchange the same greeting with one another, and an even better greeting of peace is extended to them from the Lord of Grace. It is all then a life of peace.

THE OTHER GROUPS

The section follows this account of the superior group with a similarly detailed one of the second group, to which a quick reference was made in the opening of the section. The details of their situation in the life to come are now provided at the right point, beginning with a repetition of the same question posed at the outset that gives a sense of seriousness and awe: *And the Companions of the Right—who are the Companions of the Right?* (56:27),

This group are also enjoying a luxurious and happy life, but its description gives a sense of nomadic roughness. It answers all the needs of a nomadic people as they can best imagine a life of comfort and bliss. Thus: *They will be among thornless lote-trees.* (56:28) The lote tree is known for its thorns, but here it is thornless. *And acacias, one on another.* (56:29) The acacia is a thorny type of leguminous tree well known in the Hijaz region of Arabia. However, the acacia trees in heaven are without thorns, have abundant fruit and are so situated as to enable real comfort. *And spread out shade and outpoured water.* (56:30-56:31) These are all types of comfort dreamt of by the bedouin. *And many sweet fruit. There will be neither that which is severed nor that which is inaccessible. And it is an exalted place of*

restfulness (56:32-56:34) These couches are not described as gold-encrusted, nor as having fine embroidery. They are merely 'raised high'. Raising high contains a double meaning, physical and mental, both of which complement each other. As they are raised high, both meanings converge. In position, they are far removed from all types of impurity, kept clean. Mental elevation, on the other hand, is also far removed from all that stains. Therefore, the next aspect of their blessing describes the companions they have in heaven: *Truly, We caused them (f) to grow, a good forming.* (56:35) These mates are either new ones, referring to the mates God assigns them from among the creatures that originally dwell in heaven, or they are their wives in this world, after they have been resurrected as virgins in the prime of youth. *And made them (f) virgins.* (56:36) They are full of love, of matching age. *Full of love, of the same age.* (56:37) And they are specially assigned and devoted for those on the right: *For the Companions of the Right.* (56:38)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 56:1-56:38

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

This section describes the fates of the three classes, the ones to the fore, those to the right and those to the left. It gives us a very detailed description of what they receive of favors and blessings, or misery and suffering. This makes us feel that it will all undoubtedly happen, and especially as every detail is set before our eyes. The ungrateful are made to see their fate and that of the believers and hear what is said about them after detailing their misery. The description gives the impression that the punishment is being meted out now and that life on earth is long gone, mentioned only to show how hideous and repugnant some people's way of life is.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?

4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)?**
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)?**
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)?**
8. What is its **Point of View?**

The Quranic message informs the people that there will be an Inevitable Day. What will happen on the Day of the Inevitable? The Inevitable will come to pass, one that abases and one that exalts when the earth will rock with a rocking and the mountains will crumble to dust and they will be scattered about. The Inevitable is the Day that the earth falls apart. The earth as we know it will not last forever. Among the three groups of people, those who are foremost and those who are the Companions of the Right will be exalted and those who are among the Companions of the Left will be abased. Those who will be exalted will rest in peace for eternity.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I understood Quranic dialogical reasoning after studying these verses.
The positions of Moses and those of Pharaoh were clear to me.
I understood the difference between a monotheist and a tyrant (*taghut*).

LESSON 46(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
REASONING DIALECTICALLY: EVALUATING INTERPRETATIONS

Dialectical thinking refers to dialogical thinking conducted in order to test the strengths and weaknesses of opposing points of view. Court trials and debates are dialectical in intention. They pit idea against idea, reasoning against counter-reasoning in order to get at the truth of a matter. As soon as we begin to explore ideas, we find that some clash or are inconsistent with others. If we are to integrate our thinking, we need to assess which of the conflicting ideas we will provisionally accept and which we shall provisionally reject, or which parts of the views are strong and which weak, or how the views can be reconciled. You need to develop dialectical reasoning skills, so that your thinking not only moves comfortably between divergent points of view or lines of thought, but also makes some assessments in light of the relative strengths and weaknesses of the evidence or reasoning presented. Therefore, when thinking dialectically, critical thinkers can use critical affective strategies appropriately.

TWO DISTINCT STYLES OF QURANIC STORYTELLING

One can speak about two distinct manners of story telling in the Quran: reporting the incidents from the beginning of the tale to the end, and role-play, where each player in the story plays his or her part in a transparent style. Interaction between the players then ensues.

The first approach deals with minor incidents of history. The storyteller here plays the role of guiding the listener to the fundamental points in a man ner that borders on the instructive in filling the gaps.

The importance of the dialog style of storytelling lies in its attempt tc simplify and make understandable the concept all round, so that no aspect should remain ambiguous. This is because each party to the dialog does their best to put across their point of view.

However, there is another point that distinguishes the dialog style. It paints a live and dynamic picture of the scene. Thus, the reader lives the situations, one after the other, trying to visualize the climate of the historical occurrences through the activity of the heroes of the story as though he were living then. The reader does not only experience the narrative and its connotations, but also the dynamism and atmosphere that govern the entire story. It is obvious, therefore, that recounting the facts of the story per se cannot serve this purpose, although it should provide a detailed account of the situation.

This has been the reason why the Quran has concentrated more on dialog in telling a story in order to portray a lively picture of the history of the Message in its vitality in real life situations, which the Quran has desired to relate to the present, stressing the common denominator between all the Divine Messages. It may be said too that the Quran has desired to raise the vital issues that relate to people's lives in order to give them that extra dimension in their minds.

QURANIC CHAPTER 56: THE INEVITABLE (AL-WAQIAH)
SIGNS 56:39-56:74

Makkah: *A throng of the ancient ones* (56:39)
and a throng from the later ones, (56:40)
and the Companions of the Left
—who are the Companions of the Left? (56:41)
Those who are in burning wind and scalding water (56:42)
and shade of black smoke (56:43)
neither that which is cool nor generous. (56:44)
Truly, they had been before that ones who are given ease (56:45)
and they had been persisting in tremendous wickedness. (56:46)
And they had been saying:
When we died and had been earth dust and bones,
will we, then, be ones who are raised up? (56:47)
And our ancient fathers? (56:48)
Say: Truly, the ancient ones and the later ones (56:49)
will be ones who will be gathered
to a time appointed on a known Day. (56:50)
Again, you, O ones who go astray, are the ones who deny. (56:51)
Certainly, you will be ones who eat from the Zaqqum tree. (56:52)
Then, you will be ones who fill your bellies from it, (56:53)
then, ones who drink scalding water after it. (56:54)
So you will be ones who drink
like the drinking of thirsty camels. (56:55)
This will be their hospitality on the Day of Judgment! (56:56)
We, We created you. Why establish it not as true? (56:57)
Considered you what you spill of human seed? (56:58)
Is it you who create it?
Or are We the ones who are the creators? (56:59)
We ordained death among you
and We will not be ones who will be outrun (56:60)
in that We will substitute your likeness
and We caused you to grow in a way you know not. (56:61)
And, certainly, you knew the first growth.
Will you not, then, recollect? (56:62)
Considered you the soil that you till? (56:63)
Is it you who sows it?
Or are We the ones who sow? (56:64)
If We will, We would make it into chaff
and you would continue to joke saying: (56:65)
We are ones who are debt-loaded! (56:66)
Nay! We are ones who are deprived. (56:67)
Considered you the water that you drink? (56:68)

Is it you who caused it to descend from the cloud vapors?
Or are We the ones who caused it to descend? (56:69)
If We will, We would make it bitter.
Why, then, give you not thanks? (56:70)
Considered you the fire which you strike? (56:71)
Is it you who caused the tree to grow?
Or are We the ones who cause it to grow? (56:72)
We made it an admonition and sustenance
for ones who are desert people. (56:73)
*Then, glorify with the name of **your** Lord, The Sublime.* (56:74)

COMMENTARY°

The section specifically refutes the argument of those who doubt it, denying the Quran and associating partners with God. They always wonder: *And they had been saying: When we died and had been earth dust and bones, will we, then, be ones who are raised up? And our ancient fathers?* (56:47-56:48)

These people on the right consist: *A throng of the ancient ones and a throng from the later ones.* (56:39-56:40) This means that they are greater in number than the first group of people to the fore, taking into account the two views we explained in reference to earlier and later generations.

The section now speaks about the third group, the people on the left, to whom a general reference was made earlier on. (56:41-56:56)

While the people on the right enjoy extended shade and constantly flowing water, these on the left: *Those who are in burning wind and scalding water and shade of black smoke neither that which is cool nor generous.* (56:42-56:44) The whole atmosphere is of a scorching heat that penetrates and burns the skin. The water they have to drink is also scalding, giving no refreshment. They also have shade, but it is no more than the shadows of black smoke. It is a shade painted in irony, for such shade is devoid of coolness, inviting no rest, and giving no sensation other than that produced by suffocating heat. Such hardship is a fitting requital: *Truly, they had been before that ones who are given ease.* (56:45) The absence of comfort for those who are used to indulging and excessing in luxury is hard indeed. They also persisted in heinous sin, associating partners with God.

The Arabic word used here for sin is *hinth* that means breach, violation. It implies, thus, a reference to the pledge given by human nature to maintain faith in God's Oneness and not to associate partners with Him. They are certainly in breach of that pledge. They used to say: *And they had been saying: When we died and had been earth*

dust and bones, will we, then, be ones who are raised up? And our ancient fathers? (56:47-56:48)

The section clearly uses the past tense in these last two points, saying that they persisted in sin and denied the resurrection, thus treating this present life of the addressees as though it has already ended. In other words, this scene of suffering is made to appear as though it is presently occurring After all, this whole life is no more than a twinkling of the eye, whilst the life to come is ultimate and permanent.

The section seizes this appropriate moment to answer their question, which they unfold in an exaggerated sense of incredulity: *Say: Truly, the ancient ones and the later ones will be ones who will be gathered to a time appointed on a known Day.* (56:49-56:50) The specific day is the one that has just been painted. It has been shown as though they are enduring it right now.

The section resumes the description of the suffering that awaits those who deny the truth of God's Oneness: *Again, you, O ones who go astray, are the ones who deny. Certainly, you will be ones who eat from the Zaqqum tree.* (56:51-56:52)

Again no one has ever seen devils' heads, but the very phrase gives us a clear sense. Besides, the very name, Zaqqum, implies a hard, rough surface with thorns that pierce hands and throats. This is in contrast to the thornless lote trees and flower-clad acacias that the people on the right enjoy. Although the fruit of the Zaqqum tree looks like devils' heads, these people will eat it filling your bellies with it. *Then, you will be ones who fill your bellies from it.* (56:53) Hunger is overpowering. Hard and thorny food will inevitably require a drink to ease its swallowing and refresh the stomach. They, however, will drink scalding water. *Then, ones who drink scalding water after it.* (56:54) Such a drink can never refresh or satisfy a thirsty person. Yet these people: *So you will be ones who drink like the drinking of thirsty camels.* (56:55) These camels have a well known illness making them always thirsty. *This will be their hospitality on the Day of Judgment!* (56:56)

THE BEGINNING AND THE END

This whole issue of faith is the same as the first instance of creation and the end, the giving of life and inevitable death. It is familiar, seen at all times. How come, then, that people do not believe that it is God who creates them? The weight of this truth on human nature is too heavy for anyone to challenge: *We, We created you. Why establish it not as true? Considered you what you spill of human seed?*

Is it you who create it? Or are We the ones who are the creators? (56:57-59)

Such is the beginning; but the end is in no way less miraculous or amazing, even though it is so familiar a sight: *We ordained death among you and We will not be ones who will be outrun.* (56:60) What is death, the inevitable end of every living thing? What is it? How does it occur? How come it overpowers all? It is nothing less than God's decree. Therefore, no one can escape it. No one can spring ahead of it so as to miss it. It is a stage in the chain of existence that must be completed: To be in charge of the earth after you have gone. God who has decreed death has also decreed life. He has decreed that people shall die, and that He will replace them with others like them, until the time span decreed for this stage of life comes to its end. Once it is over, then the second life begins: *In that We will substitute your likeness and We caused you to grow in a way you know not.* (56:61) This is in the realm that lies beyond the reach of our perception. It is a great realm about which humans know nothing other than what God is pleased to tell them. At that point, the journey comes to its end.

Such is how people are brought into being a second time: *And, certainly, you knew the first growth. Will you not, then, recollect?* (56:62) The two are not dissimilar in nature. There is nothing strange about it.

In such a simple approach, and with such ease the Quran portrays the two great events of bringing humans into being. With such ease and simplicity, it makes human nature face the logic it knows well. It cannot dispute this logic because it is based on its own basic facts and on what people see in their own lives. It is an approach that is free of complication, abstraction and sophistication. It is the approach of God, the Creator of the human being and the universe who bestowed the Quran from on high.

PLANT, WATER AND FIRE

Once more the Quran, in perfect ease and simplicity, puts before people something which is well known to them and which they repeatedly see. It shows how God's hand works to bring it about, showing them the miracle they overlook when it is always happening in front of their very own eyes:

Such is the first time life comes into being. Why should a second time be thought strange?

Consider the water you drink: *Nay! We are ones who are deprived. Considered you the water that you drink? Is it you who caused it to descend from the cloud vapors? Or are We the ones who*

caused it to descend? If We will, We would make it bitter. Why, then, give you not thanks? (56:68-56:70)

Consider the fire you kindle: *Considered you the fire which you strike? Is it you who caused the tree to grow? Or are We the ones who cause it to grow? We made it an admonition and sustenance for ones who are desert people.* (56:71-56:73)

The section now points to the ultimate truth that all these facts lead to: God's Lordship of the universe and His ultimate power that now manifests itself, in all its glory, to human nature. It instructs the Prophet to recognize this truth, give it its due, and bring it to the forefront so that it exercises its profound influence on peoples hearts: *Then, glorify with the name of your Lord, The Sublime.*(56:74)

Had any of this not taken place, people would say: *We are ones who are debt-loaded! Nay! We are ones who are deprived.* (56:66-56:67) It is God who, in His grace, grants them the fruits of their plants, allowing the plant to complete its cycle of life, which is similar to that which a human seed goes through from the moment it is discharged. Both are pictures of life as God makes it.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 56:39-56:74

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The Quranic signs here ask several questions of the Companions of the Left who say: When we have died and become earth dust and bones, will be ones who are raised up and our ancient fathers? The response said by the Prophet: The ancient ones and the later ones will be ones who are gathered. The Quran asks the ungrateful: We created you. Why not establish it as true? Have you considered what you have spilt of human seed? Is it you who create it? Or are We the ones who are the creators? Will you not, then, recollect? Do you consider the soil that you till? Is it you who sows it? Or are We the ones who sow? Have you considered the water that you drink? Is it you who have caused it to descend from cloud vapors? Or are We the ones who caused it to descend? Why, then, give not thanks? Have you considered the fire that you strike? Is it you who caused the tree to grow? Or are We the ones who cause it to grow?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message questions the ungrateful as to why they do not give thanks. We created you. Why not establish it as true? Have you considered what you have spilt of human seed? Is it you who create it? Or are We the ones who are the creators? Will you not, then, recollect? Do you consider the soil that you till? Is it you who sows it? Or are We the ones who sow? Have you considered the water that you drink? Is it you who have caused it to descend from cloud vapors? Or are We the ones who caused it to descend? Why, then, give not thanks? Have you considered the fire that you strike? Is it you who caused the tree to grow? Or are We the ones who cause it to grow? The questions are rhetorical. Clearly all was created by God. To think about our blessings which we did not create. One who is not grateful will be among the Companions of the Left. The ungrateful are not thankful to God for His creation.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I looked up each Quranic verse that was an example of dialectical reasoning above and understood:

If you are in doubt, ... then
Do they say ... ? Rather
Bring forward your witnesses
Bring your proof
Have they not considered?
Let the human being consider ...
Clear Proof (*bayyinatun*, *nazar*)...

LESSON 46(3). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
DEEP QUESTIONING

When reading a sign (verse, ayah), critical thinkers look for the issues that underlie the claims that are expressed. They come to their own understanding of the details. They then place this in a larger context. They move between the basic underlying issues and the larger picture of the issue at hand. They remain focused on the issue as they follow a line of thought. They organize the issues in their own way as they continue to raise questions about the issue as they increase their knowledge as the following passage regarding Prophet Muhammad and his disciplining of himself and his life.

> Despite saying that he was a simple person, there are still other such qualities that are specific to his and his personality alone. One of these qualities is his discipline. Three rooms made of mud and thatched with the leaves of the date palm (this is what his entire organization consisted of) are organized and coordinated in such a way the same administration, the same life that the greatest of all bureaucracy of the world cannot be compared to. He is like a phenomenon, a natural phenomenon like a small fragment of the world. Have a look at his mosque
>
> His life was very simple and at the same time very regular and exact. Throughout his whole lifetime he did not commit a single act of discrimination.
>
> There are three columns, the columns on which the roof of his rooms rests, three trunks of the date tree. It is written on one of them, the column of rings, on the other, the column of guards and the column of the meditation or the sleeping column on the third column. What does all this mean?
>
> Whenever the Prophet closed his prayers he used to stand beside the pulpit, so that anybody who wished to discuss their problems could come forward. A person cheated in a certain deal, would come and give an account of his difficulties. A woman unhappy about her husband, would come and discuss her problems. Two people who have quarreled, come and explain their dispute. Someone has used abusive language, the aggrieved party comes to him. Whoever wants to come, comes and says whatever he or she wants to say. But sometimes he needs to hold a commission meeting. The chiefs of the tribes have come to discuss with him something that is related to the destiny of the Quranic message. He ought to take an account of the matter. But still he does not go behind closed doors; he sits beside a pillar. While he is seated beside a particular pillar, all the Muslims who enter the mosque understand that the Prophet is holding a commis-

sion meeting, and that it is not the time for them to sit beside him. It is obvious that he has foreign visitors. That he is busy in important political talks, and therefore it is not a proper time to interrupt him. They can do so later on. They leave the place, for when the Prophet is busy with important discussions, order should be maintained. But his simplicity is still evident. No line is drawn and no walls are raised, but discipline is observed and everybody knows the nature of this business.

When the person, who is in politics, who is being intimidated, reviled, who listens to the problems of every so and so, and has attained such lofty heights of spiritual glory that the inhabitants of the heavenly spheres gaze at him with awe, needs silence and seclusion for contemplation and meditation. Whenever he wishes to be alone to with draw to himself, drown himself in thought, he goes to the pillar named the column of meditation. When he is there, no one goes to him. His family should not try to have any contact with him, his wife should not speak to him, nor the Companions nearest to him should approach him. The people have no business to disturb him either. He remains aloof and alone there. If delegations arrive, they have to wait for him. As long as he is seated near the column of meditation, everyone understands that he wishes to meditate in seclusion and is offering his prayers. When he says liturgical prayers, he does it with the people. But when he offers midnight prayers, he is in a special spiritual state. On such occasions, when he wishes to offer formal prayer all alone, no one is supposed to offer their formal prayers with him or disturb him.

This order and discipline reached such proportions that the household goods acquired specific names, whose list is given in the *Life of Muhammad* (*sirah*) written by Ibn Hisham. He had several donkeys and mules, each of whom was given a name. He did not say: Bring the black-tailed mule. It had a name. He had several caps. He had two or three turbans which he used to wear on Fridays, and on the occasion of peace talks and other important social ceremonies. Each of these turbans had a certain name. This naming of the caps is indicative of his keenness to have order in every matter. His bodily functions were exactly like nature. It was not something cultivated and acquired, as in the case of the behavior of other human beings.

One of the characteristics of the Prophet is described by Ali ibn Abi Talib who has minutely portrayed him and has given such exact physiognomic details about him that one can paint a portrait of the Prophet according to them. He has portrayed his inner reflection and characteristics with words. How modern it is! What a psychological

insight! What a vivid portrait! He says: He was neither so tall that he could be regarded tall, nor so short that he could appear slight and puny. He was square-shouldered and of sturdy build. His eyes were sharp and he had a bass voice. He walked with a fast pace, a bit inclined forward. He was prominently visible from a long distance and caught the eyes like a roaring stream gushing onwards or like a rock rolling down the mountain as if he was striding over a steep slope. From one shoulder to the other his chest was covered with thick growth of hair, a line of which reached his navel. He was so particular about cleanliness that he never used the same towel twice in his life.

Today a revolutionary is supposed to be a dirty person. In fact these are the values cherished by a revolutionary today. If anyone keeps himself neat and clean, it is said that he has adopted the bourgeoisie way of life. But this fellow, who was a revolutionary to the core of his being, whose entire paraphernalia consisted of four mats, ate date flour and date stone, transformed the whole world, and despite growing up as a shepherd in the desert, where water was scarce and hygienic conditions bad, had such a high sense of hygiene and cleanliness that he did not use a towel twice during his entire lifetime. It is written in *al-Kamisi* that he had no riches, but one third of all he possessed he spent on the articles of toilet and cosmetics. One-third of all his expenditure was for articles of dressing up, toilet and perfumes, what can I say, it seems to be unbelievable![7]

QURANIC CHAPTER 56: THE INEVITABLE (AL-WAQIAH) SIGNS 56:75-56:96

Makkah: *But no! I swear*
by the orbit of the stars (56:75)
and, truly, that is an oath
to be sworn if you know, sublime. (56:76)
Truly, it is a generous Recitation (56:77)
in a well-guarded Book. (56:78)
None touches it but the ones who are purified, (56:79)
Madinah (56:80)
Madinah (56:81)
And you make it your provision that you,
you deny the Recitation. (56:82)
Then, why not intervene when it reached the wind-pipe (56:83)
and you are looking on at the time? (56:84)
And We are nearer to him than you, yet you perceive not.(56:85)
Then, why had you not been—

if you are not ones to be judged—(56:86)
returning the soul to the body,
if you had been ones who are sincere? (56:87)
If he had been among the ones who are brought near, (56:88)
there is solace and fragrant herbs and a Garden of Bliss. (56:89)
And if he had been of the Companions of the Right, (56:90)
*then: Peace for **you** from the Companions of the Right.* (56:91)
And yet if he had been
of the ones who go astray, ones who deny, (56:92)
then, a hospitality of scalding water (56:93)
and broiling in hellfire. (56:94)
Truly, this is The Truth of certainty. (56:95)
*So glorify the Name of **your** Lord, The Almighty.* (56:96)

COMMENTARY°

A GREAT OATH

The Quran is indeed a most honorable discourse. It is unlike anything the ungrateful allege about it, claiming that it is the work of a monk or a madman or that it is fabricated, or a host of ancient legends, or that it is delivered by devils, or whatever. It is most honorable by its source, by itself and by the message and teachings it imparts.

Further description of the Quran is added in the next two signs, the second of which provides an explanation of the first: *In a well-guarded Book. None touches it but the ones who are purified.* (56:78-56:79) The ungrateful allege that the Quran was given to the Prophet by satans. This sign refutes this. No satan can touch this record, which is well-guarded, kept safe under God's care. It is purified by angels that bring it down to the Prophet. This is the better explanation of the sign that says that only the purified can touch the Quran. The negation here is a statement, not a command. In this life on earth anyone can handle the Quran: Someone who is purified or someone who is contaminated, a believer or an ungrateful. To take the negation as applying to the book containing the Quran would be erroneous. It can only be true when we take it as refuting the allegations of the ungrateful. The divine record containing the Quran in heaven is untouchable by anyone other than purified angels. This is further confirmed by the statement that follows, confirming that the Quran is: *A sending down successively from the Lord of the worlds.* (56:80)

Now the section directs its address to those who denied the truth of the Quran in another way, providing a relationship between it and the universe in a great oath by God, the Lord of all the worlds.

These signs: *But no! I swear by the orbit of the stars and, truly, that is an oath to be sworn if you know, sublime* (56:75-56:76) make an oath which is correctly rendered in the translation here. This stylistic feature mentions an oath, then appears to turn away from it. The Arabic original is far more powerful in its deliverance of what is intended. Therefore, the emphasis on the oath in the way it is rendered in English. The point is that this great truth does not need an oath to establish it, as it is already clear and well confirmed: *Truly, it is a generous Recitation.* (56: 77)

Further description of the Quran is added in the next two signs, the second of which provides an explanation of the first: *In a well-guarded Book. None touches it but the ones who are purified.* (56:78-56:79) The ungrateful alleged that the Quran was given to the Prophet by devils. This sign refutes this. No devil can touch this record, which is well-guarded, kept safe under God's care. It is purified by angels that bring it down to the Prophet. This is the better explanation of the sign that says that only the purified can touch the Quran. The negation here is a statement, not a command. In this life on earth anyone can handle the Quran: Someone who is purified or someone who is contaminated, a believer or an unbeliever. To take the negation as applying to the book containing the Quran would be erroneous. It can only be true when we take it as refuting the allegations of the ungrateful. The divine record containing the Quran in heaven is untouchable by anyone other than purified angels. This is further confirmed by the statement that follows, confirming that the Quran is a revelation from the Lord of all the worlds. *A sending down successively from the Lord of the worlds.* (56:80)

AT THE MOMENT OF DEATH

The final passage in the section speaks of the moment of death, which sends a shudder of fear into everyone. This is the moment when all argument stops, when a person stands at the end of one road and the beginning of another. It is a point of no return.

Are you in doubt about what you are told concerning a second life, denying the truth of the Quran and what it tells you about the Day of Judgment, or the principles of faith it lays down for you? *And you make it your provision that you, you deny the Recitation.* (56:82) Your denial is all that you earn and save in this life for your second life. How miserable a livelihood! What will you do when your soul is in your throat, standing on a road that leads you to the unknown?

The section paints this situation in an inspiring way, drawing all its aspects in quick touches: *Then, why not intervene when it reached*

the wind-pipe and you are looking on at the time? And We are nearer to him than you, yet you perceive not. (56:83-56:85) We almost hear a rattling sound in the throat, see the features decline and sense the distress: *Then, why not intervene when it reached the wind-pipe.* (56:83) We almost see the despair on the faces of those attending the dying person: *And you are looking on at the time?* (56:84)

At this point, when the soul is no longer concerned with anything in this world; when it has put the whole earthly world behind it; when it is about to see a world totally unknown and for which it has no provisions other than its deeds in this life; when it sees a new world and cannot say anything about it; when it has separated from all around it who only see a dying body but who stand helpless, then human power and knowledge are at their end. At this point, people realize that they are absolutely helpless. They see nothing, know nothing and can do nothing. All power and knowledge belong to God alone, with no one able to cast any doubt about this truth: *And We are nearer to him than you, yet you perceive not.* (56:85)

At this point Gods majesty is clearly felt, and people experience a sense of awe resulting from His presence. He is no doubt present at all times, but the Quranic statement reawakens the feeling of this truth which people often overlook. Therefore, the scene of death is overshadowed by feelings of God's majesty and awe, in addition to peoples own helplessness.

The section now puts forward a challenge that ends all argument: *Then, why had you not been—if you are not ones to be judged—returning the soul to the body, if you had been ones who are sincere?* (56:86-56:87) If it is true that there will be no reckoning of deed and no requital for them and you are free, with no accounting to make, then try, if you can, to restore this soul that has come up to the throat and put it back in place. Try, if you can, to prevent its march towards that reckoning while you helplessly look on. Thus all excuses, arguments and disputes end. This truth is felt to be so weighty that no person can stand up to it, except through stubborn and baseless denial.

THE FINAL DESTINATION

The section now explains the fate of our soul that has turned its back on this world to begin its new and permanent life. In the early part of the section we saw images of the blessings granted to those who are close to God. The soul of such a person will now see what awaits it: Repose, fulfilment and a garden of bliss. The very sound of these words overflows with comfort, ease and happiness.

If he had been among the ones who are brought near, there is solace and fragrant herbs and a Garden of Bliss. And if he had been of the Companions of the Right, then: Peace for you from the Companions of the Right. (56:88-56:91) This person is now directly addressed with a greeting sent to him by his brethren who are on the right. It is a gentle and delightful greeting, giving him reassurance. He begins to look forward to his forthcoming life with the people on the right. *And yet if he had been of the ones who go astray, ones who deny, then, a hospitality of scalding water and broiling in hellfire.* (56:92-94) How miserable a welcome! How terrible is the suffering of scalding water and blazing fire! It all appears before such a person and he knows that he will have to experience it.

Now that this climax has been reached, the conclusion is profound and serious in its tone:*Truly, this is The Truth of certainty. So glorify the Name of your Lord, The Almighty.* (56:95-56:96) The great weight assigned to this absolute truth in God s scales thus combines with the inevitable event mentioned at the beginning of the section. The final feeling reflects the effect of this firm belief with glorification of God, the Supreme.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 56:75-56:96

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

Glorify the Name of **your** Lord, The Almighty, Muhammad.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

Again, the Quran asks the Companions of the Left, those who deny the Inevitable Day and the Recitation (the Quran): Why when death approaches you and you are looking at time, do you not intervene? If you, the ungrateful, are not to be judged, then why do you not return the soul to the body at death if you had been ones who are sincere?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?

2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

If the Recitation is denied by the ungrateful, it is because they do not accept it as the revelation from God. Why, then, when death approaches you and you are looking at time, do you not intervene? If you, the ungrateful, are not to be judged, then why do you not return the soul to the body at death if you had been ones who are sincere? No person can intervene for himself or herself at the time of death. No person can return the soul to the body at death but God. If we do not have these powers, why not acknowledge and give thanks to the One that has this power? The ungrateful in their arrogance do not recognize the powers that they lack. No person can prevent his or her death or return his or her soul to the body.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to elaborate further on this in the classroom.
I was able to give an example of this in our classroom discussion.
I am beginning to be able to connect what I am learning to my life.

LESSON 47(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY USING INFORMATION, DATA, OBSERVATIONS

HOW DO I USE INFORMATION?

How to use information will become clear by answering the following questions:

Are things always this way, or is this statement an expression of what people are trying to achieve?
Are these ideals yours?
Why or why not?
How have people attempted to achieve this ideal?
When did they not meet the ideal? Why?
What problems did they have?
Why? How can we better achieve these ideals?

How is this supposed to work in theory? Why?
What result is it supposed ot have?
Why is that considered good?
How does this really work? Why?
What incorrect assumption is made in the theory?
What reasons are there for accepting this as it is?
For trying to make it closer to the ideal?
Is the way we actually do this justified? Why or why not?
If it is not justified, how can we correct it?

Have you ever thought something was true about yourself and acted in a way that was inconsistent with your ideal self?
Did you see yourself differently then?
Did you make efforts to change your behavior?
Can anyone think of ways to be more consistent?
Why is it often hard to be honest about yourself and the groups you belong to?

Any questions you ask require information. There are three aspects to this:

1. Does my thinking have a goal, agenda, purpose?
2. Are the questions I am being asked either explicitly or implicitly?
3. How is the information being used?

If you have information, information never uses itself. Information never gives itself meaning. It deduces implications from itself. Information must be treated

by the mind. It must be interpreted. Information must be given a meaning. As Quranic critical thinkers you must make certain to distinguish hard data from the inferences or conclusions• that are drawn from them as we learn the hard facts of life of the blessed Prophet and his family.

The house of Prophet Muhammad is like the Kabah in which the children and the inheritors of Abraham reside. It is a sign and a symbol. It is Real. It is made of stone whereas they are human beings. The Kabah is the place of circumambulation for Muslims; whereas, the house of Prophet Muhammad is the destination of every heart that understands beauty, majesty, freedom, justice, love, sincerity, and strength. It is the destination of those who encourage inner struggle and sacrifice to preserve the lives and freedom of the people.

From another point of view, the palaces of the kings (from which, historians say, waft culture, civilization, religion, thought, discipline and art) are turned around. Our intelligent, loyal, lovers of virtue who have known this household—luckless and quiet—have always been sacrificed. Our people have tied eternal links to them. All their faith, longing, thought and feelings have been devoted to them. Their hearts beat for them. Their eyes cry with their sorrow. They sacrifice themselves and their possessions in their way. They withhold nothing.

Look at these poverty-stricken, starving people who show their feelings and the faith that they have in each individual member of this beloved family. What things have they not done and what things will they not do for them?

QURANIC CHAPTER 26: THE POETS (AL-SHUARA)
SIGNS 26:1-26:9

Makkah: *Ta Sin Mim.* (26:1)
That are the signs of the clear Book. (26:2)
Perhaps you would be
one who consumes yourself in grief because
they become not ones who believe. (26:3)
If We will, We send down to them from heaven a sign
so that perhaps their necks would stay to it,
ones that are bent in humility. (26:4)
And there approaches them not any renewed Remembrance
from The Merciful but that they had been
ones who turn aside from it. (26:5)
Surely, they denied it. So soon the tiding will approach them about
what they had been ridiculing. (26:6)

Consider they the earth,
how much We caused to develop in and on it
of every generous pair? (26:7)
Truly, in that is a sign.
Yet most of them had not been ones who believe. (26:8)
Truly, your Lord, He is, certainly,
The Almighty, The Compassionate. (26:9)

COMMENTARY°

THE PROPHET'S UNNECESSARY CONCERN

Ta Sin Mim. That are the signs of the clear Book. (26:1-26:2) The section begins with three separate Arabic letters, *Ta Sin Mim*, indicating that the signs of the Quran, the book that sets things in full clarity, including the present section, are made out of such letters. These letters are available to those who deny divine revelation, and they cannot produce out of them anything similar to this clear book. The nature of the book is discussed at the beginning and end of the section, just as it is discussed in every section which has a similar beginning employing separate letters.

The section then addresses the Prophet who is concerned about the idolaters and saddened by their rejection of his message and the Quran. It comforts the Prophet telling him that the whole matter is not worth his concern. God could easily have forced them to believe by showing them a clear sign they would not have been able to resist.

There is here a note of remonstration with the Prophet for showing too much concern for the ungrateful and their attitudes: *Perhaps you would be one who consumes yourself in grief because they become not ones who believe.* (26:3) The Prophet is shown to be suffering because of his certainty that their rejection will inevitably incur punishment. Since these people belonged to his own clan and community, he took the matter to heart, feeling heavy at the inevitable prospect. God, however, is too caring to leave him to his grief. The section tells him that his responsibility does not include bringing these people into the fold of believers. Had it been God's will, He would have sent down a miraculous, overpowering sign that would have rendered all their arguments meaningless. They would then have had no option but to declare their belief in God and submit to Him. The sign gives a graphic picture of their submission to such a sign: *If We will, We send down to them from heaven a sign so that perhaps their necks would stay to it, ones that are bent in humility.* (26:4) This image depicts them with their necks permanently bent,

unable ever to look up. But God Almighty has not chosen to provide such a compelling sign with His last message. Instead, He has made the Quran, a complete and perfect code of living, His miraculous and overpowering sign.

The Quranic message is designed by God to remain open to all communities and all generations. It is not meant for any particular group or location. Therefore, its miracle should also remain available to all regardless of their community and generation. God made the Quran His miracle, rather than providing a physical miracle that leaves its onlookers speechless, having no counter argument. Physical miracles silence only those who see them, but they subsequently become no more than a piece of history.

Conversely, the Quran remains today, more than fourteen centuries after its revelation, an open book outlining a code for life. People today find in it all that they need to put their lives on the right course, should they but determine to implement it. It leads them to a better world, higher horizons and an infinitely superior destiny. Future generations will find in the Quran much that we have not been able to discover, because the Quran gives every seeker what that seeker needs, while its treasures remain self-renewing, limitless. The ungrateful were unaware of this central issue. Therefore, they continued to turn a deaf ear whenever Quranic revelations were read out to them.*And there approaches them not any renewed Remembrance from The Merciful but that they had been ones who turn aside from it.* (26:5)

We note that God's attribute mentioned here is 'the Most Merciful' indicating His great act of mercy, namely the revelation of the Quran. Thus, their turning away from it appears in its reality: it is an abhorrent act that rejects God's care and grace. They deprive themselves of such mercy when they are the ones who need it most. Their rejection of God's mercy merits the incurrence of God's punishment: *Surely, they denied it. So soon the tiding will approach them about what they had been ridiculing.* (26:6) The threat is expressed in general, unspecified terms, with a touch of sarcasm that suits their derision of God's warnings. A more literal translation of this sign is: They will in time receive the news of what it was they were wont to deride. Needless to say, they will not receive any piece of news; rather, they will endure the punishment they have derided, and they, themselves will provide the news as people relate what happens to them.

They demand a miracle while ignoring the numerous miraculous signs God has placed all around them. These are sufficient for anyone with an open heart and mind. Indeed, in every aspect of this marvel-

lous universe there is a great sign providing people with all the reassurance they need: *Consider they the earth, how much We caused to develop in and on it of every generous pair? Truly, in that is a sign. Yet most of them had not been ones who believe.* (26:7-26:8)

We feel His presence at every moment of the day and night. We also realize that we are only one type of God's creatures, subject to the same natural laws that shape existence. We also recognize that we have a special role in the universe that must be fulfilled on earth, the planet which we have been placed in charge of. *Consider they the earth, how much We caused to develop in and on it of every generous pair?* (26:7) This nobility is imparted through life that is given by God, who is most noble and most generous. The phraseology of this sign suggests that we should look at God's creation with honor and respect, and not ignore or belittle it: *Truly, in that is a sign.* (26:8) The ungrateful had been demanding a sign while in all this there is a great sign, but few are those who take heed of it: *Yet most of them had not been ones who believe.* (26:8)

The section's introduction ends with a comment that is repeated every time a point is concluded: *Truly, **your** Lord, He is, certainly, The Almighty, The Compassionate.* (26:9) He is able to provide all signs and to inflict punishment on those who deny the truth. He is also 'the Merciful' who shows His signs to those who are willing to believe.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 26:1-26:9

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The signs are to give comfort to the Prophet not to grieve for the ungrateful who deny his message. Truly, **your** Lord, Muhammad, is certainly The Almighty, The Compassionate.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

Even a sign from heaven does not convince the ungrateful.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message comforts the Prophet. Will the ungrateful give thanks if another sign were to come from heaven? Even if another sign were sent to the ungrateful, they would not believe. Therefore, Muhammad should not grieve for them. If there are those who do not accept the revelation as a sign from God, they will not give thanks even if another sign were sent to them from heaven. Arrogance prevents one from being grateful for blessings. Gratitude only comes from ones who are humble and recognize the limits to their powers. Those who are arrogant and refuse to be grateful will continue to ridicule the signs.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to:

Raise basic issues.
Explore beneath the surface of things.
Follow-up problematic areas of thought.
Discover the structure of their own thought.
Develop sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
Arrive at judgment through their own reasoning.
Note claims, evidence, conclusions, questions-at-issue, assumptions, implications, consequences, concepts, interpretations, and the Quranic point of view.

LESSON 47(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION: CLARIFYING VALUES AND STANDARDS

HOW IS DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION BY CLARIFYING VALUES AND STANDARDS USED IN THE QURAN?

THE CRITERIA INCLUDE:

Clear evidence: *Surely, clear evidence drew near you from your Lord. So whoever perceived, it will be for his own soul. Whoever was in darkness will be against his own soul. Say: And I am not a guardian over you.* (6:104)

Meditation, pondering, considering: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* (38:29)

Recollection: *And his folk argued with him. He said: You argue with me about God while, surely, He guided me? I fear not whatever partners you ascribe with Him. When my Lord wills a thing, my Lord encompassed everything in His knowledge. Will you not, then, recollect?* (6:80)

Reflection: *And among His signs are that He created for you spouses from among yourselves, that you rest in them. And He made affection and mercy among you. Truly, in that are certainly signs for a folk who reflect.* (30:21)

Taking to heart: *And whomever God wants, He guides him. He expands his breast for The Submission to One God. And whomever He wants to cause to go astray, He makes his breast tight, troubling, as if he had been climbing up a difficult ascent. Thus, God assigns disgrace on those who believe not. And this is the path of your Lord, one that is straight. Surely, We explained distinctly the signs for a folk who recollect.* (6:125-6:126)

Convincing proof from reliable and certain premises: *Say: Prepare your proof. This is a Remembrance for him who is with me and a Remembrance of him before me. Nay! Most of them know not The Truth, so they are ones who turn aside.* (21:24)

Bringing your proof, showing your evidence: *Is not He better Who begins creation, again, will cause it to return and Who provides you from the heaven and the earth. Is there a god besides God? Say: Prepare your proof if you had been ones who are sincere!* (27:64)

People of intellect and reflection: *It is He Who caused water to descend from heaven for you to drink from it and from it, trees wherein you pasture your herds. He caused crops to develop for you with it, and the olives and the date palms and the grapevines, and all kinds of fruits. Truly, in that is a sign for a folk who reflect.* (16:10-16:11)

Explaining distinctly: *And it is He Who made the stars for you so that you will be truly guided by them in the shadows of dry land and the sea. Surely,*

We explained distinctly the signs for a folk who know. (6:97-6:98)

Being reasonable: *And He caused to be subservient to you the nighttime and the daytime and the sun and the moon, and the stars, ones caused to be subservient by His command. Truly, in that are signs for a folk who are reasonable.* (16:12)

Being just and fair: *O those who believed! Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God and let not that you detest a folk drive you into not dealing justly. Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness. And be God-conscious of God. Truly, God is Aware of what you do.* (5:8)[8]

Critical thinkers understand the difference between indicating a preference for something and evaluating something. They are aware of the process and the necessary criteria in order to provide a thoughtful and fair-minded evaluation. They make use of explicit criteria.

They base their judgments on values that they have clarified and understood. When discussing the criteria of the Quranic message, critical Quranic thinkers first both understand the issue in question and the purpose of the evaluation and what function the issue being evaluated is to serve. They do this by taking into consideration various points of view in their evaluation.

The Quranic message understands the important relationship of evidence to belief and so often may qualify its statements accordingly. The tentativeness of many of its signs is characterized by the appropriate use of such qualifiers as: highly likely, probably, not very likely, highly unlikely, often, usually, seldom, I doubt, I suspect, most, many, and some. Critical thinkers are not only clear, but also exact or precise.

What information does the Quran give in this sign?
What information do I need to answer my question?

Then, believe you in some of the Book, and are ungrateful for some? (2:85)

In studying criteria and their development for evaluation in regard to problem-solving, we know that there are three well-known methods of problem-solving.

Conservatism is the method used by the guardians of Traditions—as interpreted by culture. It is used by leaders who guard and preserve society so that the guardians have something to guard.

The logic of the conservative is this: If we change the customs of the past, it is as if we had separated the roots from the trunk of a tree. The cultural relationships which are preserved in custom are connected to the body of society like a hierarchy of nerves. If the

roots are destroyed, so is the rest of the tree.

It is exactly because of this that after a great revolution, anguish, confusion and/or dictators come into being. Hastily digging out the roots of social and cultural phenomena in a quick, revolutionary manner will cause society to face a sudden void. The unfortunate results of this void will be made apparent after the revolution subsides.

Revolutionism is a method used by leaders who tear out things by the roots, believing that all custom is based only on old superstitions and, is, therefore, reactionary and rotten. The reasoning of the revolutionary runs like this: by retaining outdated cultural customs, we keep society outdated and living in the past. We stagnate. Thus a revolutionary leader says that all forms inherited from the past should be eliminated because these forms are like chains around our wrists, feet, spirit, thoughts, will and vision. All of our relationships to the past should be done away with. New rules should replace old. Otherwise society remains behind, fanatic, stagnant, and bound to the past.

Reformism is a method used by people who believe in gradual change. These people lay the groundwork for gradual change in social conditions. Reformism is the middle way between the other two. The reasoning of the returner is just as weak as that of the other two methods. He takes a third way, believing change should be quiet and gradual so that the different factions do not oppose each other. If change is gradual, reformers reason, the foundation of society will not take on a revolutionary form but rather change over a long period of time. Thus, programs should be graduated to reach this end.

But the method of reformism or gradual evolution usually faces negative, strong reactions from internal and external enemies during the long time period this method requires. These forces either stop it or destroy it.

QURANIC CHAPTER 26: THE POETS (AL-SHUARA)
SIGNS 26:10-26:33

Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:10)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:11)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:12)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:13)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:14)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:15)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:16)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:17)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:18)

Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:19)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:20)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:21)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:22)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:23)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:24)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:25)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:26)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:27)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:28)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:29)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:30)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:31)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:32)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:33)

QURANIC CHAPTER 26: THE POETS (AL-SHUARA) SIGNS 26:34-26:51

Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:34)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:35)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:36)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:37)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:38)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:39)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:40)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:41)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:42)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:43)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:44)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:45)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:46)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:47)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:48)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:49)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:50)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:51)

QURANIC CHAPTER 26: THE POETS (AL-SHUARA) SIGNS 26:52-26:68

Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:52)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:53)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:54)

Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:55)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:56)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:57)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:58)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:59)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:60)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:61)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:62)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:63)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:64)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:65)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:66)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:67)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (26:68)

QURANIC CHAPTER 26: THE POETS (AL-SHUARA)
SIGNS 26:69-26:104

Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (26:69)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (26:70)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (26:71)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (26:72)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (26:73)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (26:74)
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Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (26:95)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (26:95)
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Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (26:97)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (26:98)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (26:99)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (26:100)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (26:101)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (26:102)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (26:103)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (26:104)

QURANIC CHAPTER 26: THE POETS (AL-SHUARA) SIGNS 26:105-26:122

Makkah: Book 25: Noah (26:105)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (26:106)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (26:107)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (26:108)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (26:109)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (26:110)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (26:111)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (26:112)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (26:113)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (26:114)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (26:115)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (26:116)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (26:117)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (26:118)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (26:119)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (26:120)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (26:121)
Makkah: Noah (26:122)

QURANIC CHAPTER 26: THE POETS (AL-SHUARA) SIGNS 26:123-26:140

Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (26:123)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (26:124)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (26:126)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (26:127)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (26:128)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (26:129)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (26:130)

Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (26:131)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (26:132)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (26:133)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (26:134)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (26:135)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (26:136)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (26:137)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (26:138)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (26:139)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (26:140)

QURANIC CHAPTER 26: THE POETS (AL-SHUARA)
SIGNS 26:141-26:159

Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (26:141)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (26:142)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (26:143)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (26:144)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (26:145)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (26:146)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (26:147)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (26:148)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (26:149)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (26:150)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (26:151)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (26:152)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (26:153)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (26:154)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (26:155)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (26:156)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (26:157)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (26:158)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (26:159)

QURANIC CHAPTER 26: THE POETS (AL-SHUARA)
SIGNS 26:160-26:175

Makkah: Book 26: Lot (26:160)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (26:161)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (26:162)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (26:163)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (26:164)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (26:165)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (26:166)

Makkah: Book 26: Lot (26:167)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (26:168)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (26:169)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (26:170)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (26:171)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (26:172)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (26:173)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (26:174)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (26:175)

QURANIC CHAPTER 26: THE POETS (AL-SHUARA)
SIGNS 26:176-26:191

Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb), the People of Midian, Companions of the Thicket, Woods (Rass) (26:176)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb), the People of Midian, Companions of the Thicket, Woods (Rass) (26:177)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb), the People of Midian, Companions of the Thicket, Woods (Rass) (26:178)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb), the People of Midian, Companions of the Thicket, Woods (Rass) (26:179)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb), the People of Midian, Companions of the Thicket, Woods (Rass) (26:180)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb), the People of Midian, Companions of the Thicket, Woods (Rass) (26:181)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb), the People of Midian, Companions of the Thicket, Woods (Rass) (26:182)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb), the People of Midian, Companions of the Thicket, Woods (Rass) (26:183)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb), the People of Midian, Companions of the Thicket, Woods (Rass) (26:184)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb), the People of Midian, Companions of the Thicket, Woods (Rass) (26:185)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb), the People of Midian, Companions of the Thicket, Woods (Rass) (26:186)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb), the People of Midian, Companions of the Thicket, Woods (Rass) (26:187)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb), the People of Midian, Companions of the Thicket, Woods (Rass) (26:188)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb), the People of Midian, Companions of the Thicket, Woods (Rass) (26:189)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb), the People of Midian, Companions of the Thicket, Woods (Rass) (26:190)

Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb), the People of Midian, Companions of the Thicket, Woods (Rass) (26:191)

QURANIC CHAPTER 26: THE POETS (AL-SHUARA)
SIGNS 26:192-26:227

Makkah: *And this, truly,*
is the sending down successively
of the Lord of the worlds (26:192)
that the Trustworthy Spirit brought down (26:193)
*on **your** heart that **you** be among the one who warn* (26:194)
in a clear Arabic tongue. (26:195)
And, truly, it is in the ancient scrolls
of the ancient ones. (26:196)
Madinah (26:197)
And if We sent it down to some of the non-Arabs, (26:198)
and he recited it to them, they had not been
ones who believe in it. (26:199)
Thus, We thrust it into the hearts of the ones who sin. (26:200)
They will not believe in it
until they see the painful punishment. (26:201)
Then, it will approach them suddenly
while they are not aware. (26:202)
Then, they will say: Are we ones who are given respite? (26:203)
Seek they to hasten Our punishment? (26:204)
*Had **you** considered that*
if We gave them enjoyment for years (26:205)
and, again, there drew near them
what they had been promised, (26:206)
they would not be availed by what
they had been given of enjoyment? (26:207)
We caused no town to perish
but that it had ones who warn (26:208)
as a reminder.
And We had not been ones who are unjust. (26:209)
It came not forth by the satans (26:210)
and neither is it fit and proper
for them nor are they able. (26:211)
Truly, they, from having the ability to hear,
are the ones who are set aside. (26:212)
*So call **you** not to any god with God*
*so that **you** be among the ones who are punished.* (26:213)
[*And warn **your** nearest kin, the kinspeople.* (26:214)]
(Revealed in the 3rd year)
*And make low **your** wing to whoever followed **you***

among the ones who believe. (26:215)
Then, if they rebelled against ***you****, then, say:*
Truly, I am free of what you do. (26:216)
And put ***your*** *trust in The Almighty, The Compassionate,* (26:217)
Who sees ***you*** *at the time* ***you*** *stand up* (26:218)
and ***your*** *going to and fro*
of the ones who prostrate themselves? (26:219)
Truly, He is The Hearing, The Knowing. (26:220)
Will I tell you in whom the satans come forth? (26:221)
They come forth in every sinful false one
who gives listen, (26:222)
but most of them are ones who lie. (26:223)
Madinah (26:224)
Madinah (26:225)
Madinah (26:226)
But those who believed
and did as the ones in accord with morality
remembered God frequently
and helped themselves after they were wronged.
And those who did wrong will know
by which overturning they will be turned about! (26:227)

COMMENTARY°

This evidence came from within the Quran itself. The section, however, also provides further evidence, but this time it is external: *And, truly, it is in the ancient scrolls of the ancient ones.* (26:196)

Those idolaters were knowingly stubborn in their opposition. They did not lack the evidence or the proof. Had a non-Arab come to them and recited the Quran in its superb Arabic style, they would still have refused to believe: *And if We sent it down to some of the non-Arabs, and he recited it to them, they had not been ones who believe in it.* (26:198-26:199) This was meant to comfort the Prophet, presenting to him their stubborn refusal despite the clearest form of evidence. The section then states that such denial of the truth, despite its clarity and certainty, was second nature to them. They would not depart from this stance until they suffered God's punishment, which would take them by surprise: *Thus, We thrust it into the hearts of the ones who sin. They will not believe in it until they see the painful punishment. Then, it will approach them suddenly while they are not aware.* (26:200-26:202)

Thus the section provides a physical image of their unbudging denial of the revelation of the Quran, saying that it has been made to

pass through their constitution in denial form. *Then, they will say: Are we ones who are given respite?* (26:203) Can we have another chance to rectify what has passed? That, however, will never be given.

They hastened God's punishment with their careless ridicule, believing that the comforts they enjoyed would last: *Seek they to hasten Our punishment? Had you considered that if We gave them enjoyment for years and, again, there drew near them what they had been promised, they would not be availed by what they had been given of enjoyment?* (26:204-26:207) The section puts the image of hastening punishment to one side, and raises the prospect of the fulfilment of the warnings. We see the years of pleasure dwindling, as though they had never been. They benefit them in no way.

We caused no town to perish but that it had ones who warn as a reminder. And We had not been ones who are unjust. (26:208-26:209)

God took a pledge from all humanity that they would worship Him alone. This is the pledge of nature which makes human nature feel the presence of the One God, unless it grows corrupt and deviates. He placed countless indications in the world around us pointing to the right faith. All these confirm the presence of the One Creator. When people forget the pledge of their own nature, and overlook the pointers to faith, God sends them a warner to remind them of what they have forgotten and puts before their eyes what they have overlooked. Thus, the divine message is meant as a reminder and an act of perfect justice and total mercy: *As a reminder. And We had not been ones who are unjust.* (26:209) This is true even with the destruction of unbelieving communities. Such destruction is fair requital for deviating from proper guidance.

The section has more to say about the Quran making the method of its revelation very clear: *It came not forth by the satans and neither is it fit and proper for them nor are they able. Truly, they, from having the ability to hear, are the ones who are set aside.* (26:210-26:212)

At this juncture, the section addresses the Prophet, warning him against associating partners with God, even though he was always far from so doing. Yet the warning is given to him so that he could be more careful. **The Prophet is assigned the task of warning his closest kinsmen (revealed previously),** and ordered to place his trust in God who takes care of him in all situations: *So call **you** not to any god with God so that **you** be among the ones who are punished. **And warn your nearest kin, the kinspeople.** And make low **your** wing to whoever followed **you** among the ones who believe. Then, if they rebelled against **you**, then, say: Truly, I am free of what you do. And*

*put **your** trust in The Almighty, The Compassionate, Who sees **you** at the time **you** have stood up and **your** going to and fro of the ones who prostrate themselves? Truly, He is The Hearing, The Knowing.* (26:213, **214,** 215-220)

Once more in this final passage of the section, the Quran is brought into focus. The first comment emphasized that it was a revelation from the Lord of all the worlds, brought to Muhammad through the trusted Spirit, Gabriel. Secondly, it made clear that no evil spirit could deliver it. Now the section asserts that such evil ones do not come to a person like Muhammad, who is honest, truthful and advocates a sound system. They go only to a liar, such as a wicked fortune-teller. Such people receive whatever evil spirits give them and circulate their dis-information widely after they themselves have further exaggerated it: *Will I tell you in whom the satans come forth? They come forth in every sinful false one who gives listen, but most of them are ones who lie.* (26:221-26:223)

The section then concludes with a general implicit warning: *But those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality remembered God frequently and helped themselves after they were wronged. And those who did wrong will know by which overturning they will be turned about!* (26:227)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 26:192-26:227

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The signs address the Prophet: The Quran was revealed to **your** heart by the Trustworthy Spirit (Gabriel) in a clear Arabic tongue repeating what had been in the previous sacred scriptures. Had you, Muhammad, considered tha if we gave the ungrateful enjoyment for years, and again, there drew near them what they had been promised, they would not be availed by what they had been given of enjoyment? Call **you**, Muhammad, not upon any god with God so that **you**, Muhammad, be among the ones who are punished. And make low **your** wing, Muhammad, to whoever follows **you** among the ones who believe. However, if they rebel against **you**, then say: Truly, I am free of what you do. Put **your** trust, Muhammad, in The Almighty, The Compassionate who sees **you** when you stand up and **your** going to and fro among the ones who prostrate themselves.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The Quran says that the ungrateful will ask: Are we ones who are given respite? And, do they seek to hasten the punishment? God has not been unjust. The Quran has not been given by the satans. They are not able.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message speaks about the ungrateful and their stubborn rejection of the Quranic message. Why do they continue to deny the message and the warnings? The ungrateful are heedless of the approach to warnings, the hastening of their punishment, as well as scenes of the destruction of past communities. The first comment emphasized that it was a revelation from the Lord of all the worlds, brought to Muhammad through the trusted Spirit, Gabriel. Secondly, it made clear that no evil spirit could deliver it. Such evil ones do not come to a person like Muhammad, who is honest, truthful and advocates a sound system. They go only to a liar. Such people receive whatever evil spirits give them and circulate their dis-information widely after they themselves have further exaggerated it: *Will I tell you in whom the satans come forth? They come forth in every sinful false one who gives listen, but most of them are ones who lie.* Evil persons do not come to a person like Muhammad. The Quranic signs are from God, not from any evil spirits. The ungrateful are saying that the satans brought the Quran to the Prophet.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

Sometimes I worry unproductively.
Sometimes I spend time regretting what is past.
Sometimes I just stare off blankly into space.

LESSON 48(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ACTIONS

You should evaluate your actions in regard to Prophets of the past.

Analyzing actions revealed in the Quran, one of the peculiarities of the Quranic message is that it accepts both beliefs which are identical to it as well as coercive beliefs of society. It admits to the existence of both. Here the perception of Islam is special.

The idealistic schools of thought embrace the highest values, the absolute and most desirable ideologies. Each and every fact is categorically rejected if it does not suit them. They have no patience. They deny unpleasant realities and dig out the roots of anger. Anger, violence, pleasure-seeking and greed are realities which do exist. Moral idealism or religious idealism (i.e. Christianity) ignores these vices and denies their existence.

On the other hand, schools of thought which are based on realism accept all things as the basis of reality. For instance, sodomy is not accepted in England or in Christianity due to religious idealism, not reality. Divorce among Catholics is prohibited to preserve the family and to reinforce the sacred nature of marriage.

But reality is other than this. Some human beings cannot preserve the first, sacred marriage and remain loyal to each other. It so often happens that human beings grow apart during their lifetime. They become strangers. They live together like two pitiful people. That which has joined them is not love; it is only the ties of law. They are afflicted. One might even become lucky with someone else. This reality has existed in the past, exists in the present and will exist in the future. Civilized and uncivilized people, the religious and the nonreligious, have felt it and continue to feel it. Statistics show it, but some Christian groups deny this reality. They bind marriage to the sacred. They force a family to stay together even when a real hell is behind the doors, and the family has become a center of murder, adultery and corruption. The door of divorce has been closed, but thousands of windows of swindle and illegality have been opened.

NEITHER IDEALISM NOR REALISM: BOTH

Islam is a pure tree which belongs neither to the East nor the West but has its roots in the heavens and its branches reaching towards the earth. Contrary to idealism, Islam recognizes the realities of life (in both body and spirit) of the individual, as well as the realities of community relationships and of the depths of a society seen only in the motion of history.

Islam like realism only admits to the existence of life's harsher realities, but unlike realism, Islam does not accept the *status quo* but seeks to change. It changes essence in a revolutionary way. It carries the common idea of 'reality' along with its ideals. It uses such realities as a means to reach its idealistic goals, its real desires, which are without form by themselves. Unlike realism, Islam does not submit to realities, but rather, it causes the realities to submit to it. Islam does not turn away from realities as idealists do. It seeks them out. It tames them. Through this means, Islam uses that which hinders the idealists as raw material for its own ideals.

Islam accepts divorce in certain social circumstances. If it did not accept divorce, divorce would still exist, but it would be outside its control. By accepting an unavoidable, natural reality, it makes it into a legal form. As a result, one can conquer the sense of guilt one has in the eyes of God and society. Thus, divorce is based upon ethical principles and religion is preserved. Such people can nourish their environment. Society does not look upon them as sinners or on their children as illegal and impure.

Islam succeeded the day it admitted the existence of these social and human realities. Because of this, it can control its results. It can give realities a corrected legal form. It can bestow an ethical and religiously accepted form upon amorphous 'facts'. By confirming and admitting the existence of reality, Islam gains strength. It can then control, guide and dominate any reality within its framework.

If we deny realities, they will dominate us. Without knowing it, we will be pulled wherever they want us to go, and we, like the realists, will be drowned in existing realities, whether good or bad. On the other hand, idealists make the mistake of imprisoning themselves in the chains of useless customs. Realists move along with realities and accept them. Idealists who do not recognize such realities, deny them through their ignorance and their attachment to imaginary ideals. Idealists are then attacked by realities. The idealists fall on their knees because they are defenseless, inexperienced and weak. They are destroyed.

We don't see the form that girls who are raised in very strict religious homes take. We don't see how she covers her face so that, God forbid, the fish in the courtyard pool do not see her. What happens when she enters the ocean of society? She vigorously swims, but she is so afraid that she loses control of herself and drowns. In order to make up for what she lacks now, she pays her fine a thousand times over.

The same is true for young men who grow up in a pious society.

The *nouveau riche* have just moved from the former world of their idealistic pseudo-religious environment in which they were prohibited from learning physics or chemistry, and in which women were forbidden to have a high school or college education. The men did not shave their beards. They sat in coaches instead of in buses or in taxis. They wore no neck-tie. They did not let their hair grow long. They did not change the form of their clothes or their hair-style. They neither bought radios nor did they spread the word of the Koran through a microphone! Suddenly, these young people faced the new world of realities, full of twists and turns.

You see what confusion it has caused. The newly rich young person sees the pretense. He has learned certain airs through watching Western films and TV. He has learned about showing off luxury and being silly. He has seen the exaggeration of it all. It is so exaggerated that even foreigners laugh about it. Why? Because these pretenses exist side by side with reality whereas we deny the realities before we even come to know them. This is why we have been captured by our imagination.

This new civilization has attacked all boundaries toppled all the watchtowers of the world. The new generation has been caught in the whirling wind of the Renaissance, the 17th century intellectual movements, the French revolution and the industrialized life style. These historical events changed the weather of the world. The change of atmosphere of our country is also a reality. It is a most certain reality. It is clear that sooner or later lightening will strike. When i does, machines, printing presses, books, newspapers, democracy electronic media, movies, schools, women's education, new industrial techniques, new sciences, and many other new things will come and will change us.

The leaders of the people, those responsible for ethics, those who have been given the responsibility of guiding lives and thoughts, those who stand face to face with unavoidable realities have closed their eyes. They have given their hearts to mental ideologies and to their ancient thoughts. They have tried to preserve their horse drawn carriages side by side with taxis.

They still light lamps when they have electricity. They correctly predict the rush to the inferior world. They know it will bring about the decline of much belief, faith, piety, health and independence. They know that corruption will find a home deep within people's brains. But face to face with this rush towards modernity (and knowing the relationship which it imposes on the furthermost points and on the most backward tribes of society—even those in the depths of

the desert) they only say one thing and one thing only: Forbidden! Radio? Don't buy one. Movies? Don't see them. Television? Don't watch. Loudspeaker? Don't listen. University? Don't go. The new science? Don't study it. Newspapers? Don't read them. Vote? Don't do it. Office work? Don't do it and..woman? Shhh...Don't mention that word!

Face to face with the flood of new technology covering the globe, face to face with civilization which sells refrigerators to the Eskimos, they attempt to completely defend the past. Their total army and strategy consists of only two words: 'Forbidden!' and 'No!'.

What is the result? What we see is what happens. Contemporary events and realities break the barriers and tear down the watch-towers. Realities tears down the bricks of the walls and destroys the defenders of the past who hide with their eyes closed and faces averted in disapproval..

The force of these modern consumerist realities ruins everything at once. They attack the city's inhabited areas, its bazaars, mosques and even our homes like wild bulls, wolves or chained dogs. They plunder everything. But they do not leave. They come, they kill, they burn and they take, but they do not leave as the army of Genghis Khan left. Why?

Because no one even sees them. Our border guards, our watchmen, don't like them. They are so exasperated that they don't even bother to look at them. They don't want to go and separate the good from the bad and correct them. They don't want to adapt them to the climate and the people of our country. They don't want to choose among them. They don't want to shame, control and dominate them. They stand in the middle of the road facing a driverless car. They are run over and crushed.

This is why the veiled woman who wants to give birth to her children, screams, "Why men physicians? Why should women not be treated by women physicians?" She wants her child to go to school and to the university. Her cries increase—is this the faculty of literature or a fashion show? Is this an Islamic university? Is this an Islamic society? Does this school smell just a bit of Islam? Does it contain a bit of ethics and meaning? Is this the radio of a religious country or just a noise box? What kind of a translation is this of one culture by another—this full-scale importation of television, publications, laws, and banks? What film is this? What theater? What art? What craft? Really, what kind of a civilization is this?

It takes great effort to effectively interfere in events which unfold. Yet it is only through this effort that one can guide the deter-

mined motion of society. People who believe we should preserve that which is incapable of being preserved which is dying (and who are in a position to advise those who inspire, those who appease and those who give condolences) do not recognize the dangers. They create believers from among those who accept the unacceptable. They delude the majority of society. They keep them in an unholy state of prostration—silent, weak and submissive.

Those who seek a flowing, active society and want a better human life, acknowledge realities. They know pain. They take their strength from pain in order to heal their wounds. This group does not include those who, as demigods, defend that which is incapable of being defended, or those who take the public into their own hands, or those who follow the styles of the day, or those who praise according to what is fashionable, or those who try to attach themselves to something.

Those who acknowledge realities are people who know time moves. They know that society has a skin which it sheds. They feel that the strong forces of the world have turned to us to make us change. Neither are they sufficiently without pain to sit down and watch, nor are they, without shame, able to take whatever job is handed to them. They are not so stupid as one who sees a flood covering his town but protects only his wife and children, pulls only his own carpet from the water. They know that today is not like the pa when families were living in a closed society. Now, even if you hi your daughter in the back room of your house, national and intern tional television will follow her, find her and show her the attraction of the outside world.[9]

QURANIC CHAPTER 27: THE ANT (AL-NAML)

SIGNS 27:1-27:14

Makkah: *The signs of the Quran and a clear Book,* (27:1)
a guidance and good tidings for the ones who believe, (27:2)
those who perform the formal prayer and give the purifying alms
so that they of the world to come, they are certain. (27:3)
Truly, as for those who believe not in the world to come,
We made their actions appear pleasing to them
so that they wander unwilling to see. (27:4)
Those are those for whom is the dire punishment
and they, in the world to come,
they are the ones who are the losers. (27:5)
*And, truly, **you**, **you** are in receipt of the Quran, that which proceeds*
from the Presence of One who is Wise, Knowing. (27:6)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (27:7)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (27:8)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (27:9)

Makkah: Book 27: Moses (27:10)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (27:11)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (27:12)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (27:13)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (27:14)

QURANIC CHAPTER 27: THE ANT (AL-NAML)
SIGNS 27:15-27:31

Makkah: Book 28: David and Solomon (27:15)
Makkah: Book 28: David and Solomon (27:16)
Makkah: Book 28: David and Solomon (27:17)
Makkah: Book 28: David and Solomon (27:18)
Makkah: Book 28: David and Solomon (27:19)
Makkah: Book 28: David and Solomon (27:20)
Makkah: Book 28: David and Solomon (27:21)
Makkah: Book 28: David and Solomon (27:22)
Makkah: Book 28: David and Solomon (27:23)
Makkah: Book 28: David and Solomon (27:24)
Makkah: Book 28: David and Solomon (27:25)
Makkah: Book 28: David and Solomon (27:26)
Makkah: Book 28: David and Solomon (27:27)
Makkah: Book 28: David and Solomon (27:28)
Makkah: Book 28: David and Solomon (27:29)
Makkah: Book 28: David and Solomon (27:30)
Makkah: Book 28: David and Solomon (27:31)

QURANIC CHAPTER 27: THE ANT (AL-NAML)
SIGNS 27:32-27:44

Makkah: Book 28: Solomon and the Queen of Sheba (27:32)
Makkah: Book 28: Solomon and the Queen of Sheba (27:33)
Makkah: Book 28: Solomon and the Queen of Sheba (27:34)
Makkah: Book 28: Solomon and the Queen of Sheba (27:35)
Makkah: Book 28: Solomon and the Queen of Sheba (27:36)
Makkah: Book 28: Solomon and the Queen of Sheba (27:37)
Makkah: Book 28: Solomon and the Queen of Sheba (27:38)
Makkah: Book 28: Solomon and the Queen of Sheba (27:39)
Makkah: Book 28: Solomon and the Queen of Sheba (27:40)
Makkah: Book 28: Solomon and the Queen of Sheba (27:41)
Makkah: Book 28: Solomon and the Queen of Sheba (27:42)
Makkah: Book 28: Solomon and the Queen of Sheba (27:43)
Makkah: Book 28: Solomon and the Queen of Sheba (27:44)

QURANIC CHAPTER 27: THE ANT (AL-NAML)
SIGNS 27:45-27:58

Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (27:45)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (27:46)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (27:47)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (27:48)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (27:49)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (27:50)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (27:51)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (27:52)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (27:53)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (27:54)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (27:55)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (27:56)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (27:57)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (27:58)

QURANIC CHAPTER 27: THE ANT (AL-NAML)
SIGNS 27:59-27:66

Makkah: *Say: The Praise belongs to God*
and peace be on His servants,
those whom He favored. Is God better or
what they ascribe as partner with God? (27:59)
Who created the heavens and the earth
and caused to descend for you from the heavens, water?
With it We caused joyous, fertile gardens to develop.
It had not been for you to cause their trees to develop.
Is there any god besides God? Nay!
They are a folk who equate others with God. (27:60)
Who made the earth a stopping place and made rivers in the midst
and made firm mountains for it
and made between the two sees that which hinders?
Is there a god besides God?
Nay! But most of them know not! (27:61)
Is not He better Who answers one who is constrained
when he called to Him
and He removes the evil and assigns you
as vice-regents on the earth?
Is there a god besides God?
Little is what you recollect! (27:62)
Is not He better Who guides you
in the shadows of the dry land and the sea

and Who sends the winds, bearer of good news
in advance of His mercy?
Is there a god besides God?
Exalted is God above partners
they ascribe with Him. (27:63)
Is not He better Who begins creation, again,
will cause it to return
and Who provides you from the heaven and the earth.
Is there a god besides God?
Say: Prepare your proof if you had been
ones who are sincere! (27:64)
Say: None knows who is in the heaven and the earth,
nor the unseen but God.
Nor are they aware when they will be raised up. (27:65)
Nay! Their knowledge of the world to come failed.
Nay! They are in uncertainty about it.
Nay! They are in the dark about it. (27:66)

COMMENTARY°

The Quran then takes us on a descriptive round of some great universal scenes: *Say: The Praise belongs to God and peace be on His servants, those whom He favored. Is God better or what they ascribe as partner with Him?* (27:59), as also some of the deeper aspects of the human soul. In this way, the section shows us the work of the great Maker, Planner, Creator and Sustainer who alone knows what lies beyond the reach of any created being's perception, and to whom we shall all return. It then tells us about one of the aspects that signal the coming of the Last Hour, adding some images of the Day of Judgment and the fate that awaits those who deny it.

The Quran directs people's attentions to the fine effects of sending rain in suitable measure to meet their needs: *Is not He better Who created the heavens and the earth and caused to descend for you from the heavens, water? With it We caused joyous, fertile gardens to develop. It had not been for you to cause their trees to develop. Is there any god besides God? Nay! They are a folk who equate others with God.* (27:60)

Or, who is it that made the earth a stable abode and caused rivers to run in its midst, and has set upon it firm mountains, and has placed a barrier between the two great bodies of water? Could there be any deity alongside God? Nay, most of them are devoid of knowledge. *Is not He better Who made the earth a stopping place and made rivers in the midst and made firm mountains for it and made between*

the two sees that which hinders? Is there a god besides God? Nay! But most of them know not! (27:61)

Who has done all this? Knowledge is mentioned here because this universal fact needs knowledge to be properly contemplated and for its meticulous aspects to be made clearly apparent to all. Moreover, knowledge is emphasized throughout the section, as we have already explained.

Next, the section tells them about themselves: *Is not He better Who answers one who is constrained when he called to Him and He removes the evil and assigns you as vice-regents on the earth? Is there a god besides God? Little is what you recollect!* (27:62)

The section continues to direct their feelings to realities in their life: *And makes you inherit the earth?* Who is it that allows people to take charge of the earth? It is God who initially placed humanity in charge of the earth, and then made them succeed one another, generation after generation. It is He who created them in accordance with laws of nature that allow their existence on earth, and granted them talents and abilities that prepare them for their great task of building life on earth.

All these are facts we find within the human soul, in the same way as the facts mentioned earlier exist in the universe. Who brought about their existence? *Is not He better Who answers one who is constrained when he called to Him and He removes the evil and assigns you as vice-regents on the earth?* (27:62) They certainly forget or choose to be oblivious. *Is there a god besides God? Little is what you recollect!* (27:62) Had we reflected on such facts, we would maintain our bond with God as it was originally. We would not have been oblivious of it, and we would never have associated partners with God.

Or, who is it that guides you in the midst of the deep darkness of land and sea, and sends forth the winds as heralds of His forthcoming grace? Could there be any deity alongside God? Sublimely exalted is God above anything they associate with Him. *Is not He better Who guides you in the shadows of the dry land the sea and* (27:63)

Or, who is it that guides you in the midst of the deep darkness of land and sea, and sends forth the winds as heralds of His forthcoming grace? Could there be any deity alongside God? Sublimely exalted is God above anything they associate with Him. *Who sends the winds, bearer of good news in advance of His mercy? Is there a god besides God? Exalted is God above partners they ascribe with God.* (27:63)

With the acknowledgement of God as the originator of creation and the One who brings the dead back to life, the section asks the

same question again: *Is not He better Who begins creation, again, will cause it to return and Who provides you from the heaven and the earth. Is there a god besides God? Say: Prepare your proof if you had been ones who are sincere!* (27:64)

Having taken us on this round of universal imagery and facts about our lives to establish the truth of God's Oneness and the falsehood of polytheism, the section begins a new passage citing aspects of what lies beyond the reach of human perception, known only to God. These signs discuss the life to come, which human nature and logic accept as essential, but the timing of which our knowledge cannot determine: *Say: None knows who is in the heaven and the earth, nor the unseen but God. Nor are they aware when they will be raised up. Nay! Their knowledge of the world to come failed.Nay! They are in uncertainty about it. Nay! They are in the dark about it.* (27:65-27:66)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 27:59-27:66

WHO IS GOD?

The question asked four times: Is there any god besides God? and answer serve to prove the Unity or Oneness of God. *We caused joyous, fertile gardens to develop. It had not been for you,* ungrateful, *to cause their trees to develop. Is there any god besides God?*

God made the *earth a stopping place and made rivers in the midst and made firm mountains for it and made between the two seas that which hinders. Is there a god besides God?*

Is not He better Who guides you in the shadows of the dry land and the sea and Who sends the winds, bearer of good news in advance of His mercy? Is there a god besides God?

Is not He better Who begins creation, again, will cause it to return and Who provides you from the heaven and the earth? Is there a god besides God?

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Prophet is told to say: *None knows who is in the heaven and the earth nor the unseen but God. Nor are they aware when they will be raised up. Nay! Their knowledge of the world to come failed. Nay! They are in uncertainty about it. Nay! They are in the dark about it.*

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evi-

dence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message tells the ungrateful that there is no god besides God. Is there a god besides God? God created the heavens and the earth and caused water to descend from heaven. The One God caused fertile gardens and trees to develop. The One God created earth as a stopping place, made rivers and firm mountains and a barrier between sweet and salty water. The One God guides us in the shadows of the dry land and the sea and sends the winds. The One God began creation and will cause it to return. There can only be One God, Creator and Sustainer of the heavens and the earth. Otherwise, there would be chaos in the heavens and the earth instead of harmony and order. There can only be One God, One Creator who maintains harmony and order. There is only One God to worship and not many gods as the ungrateful Quraysh were insisting. The order in the universe is because there is just One God who created it..

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

Sometimes I become irritated about matters beyond my control.
Sometimes I fail to plan well causing me negative consequences I could easily have avoided (for example, I spend time unnecessarily trapped in traffic—though I could have left a half hour earlier and avoided the rush).

LESSON 48(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
DISTINGUISHING RELEVANT FROM IRRELEVANT INFORMATION

You can then discover that sometimes you must argue for the relevance of a particular fact to an issue. Another technique for developing your sensitivity to relevance is to change an issue slightly and compare what was relevant to the first issue to what is relevant to the second. You could read the section and signs with one or more issues in mind and note relevant details. You could then share and discuss your lists. You can then discover that sometimes you must argue for the relevance of a particular fact to an issue. You may assume that they have to use all information they are given to ask a question. You need to learn how to limit your responses with only the relevant facts. Implications are deduced from information after the information is interpreted and given a meaning.

When discussing an issue, solution to a problem, or when giving reasons for a conclusion, you can practice limiting their remarks to facts which are relevant to that or conclusion. Don't assume that all information given has to be used to solve a problem. Life does not sort relevant from irrelevant information for us. Make a case for the pertinence of your remarks, and see when your remarks are irrelevant.

WHAT INFORMATION IN THESE FOLLOWING SIGNS ARE RELEVANT TO ME?
Questions you can ask when you are not sure whether something is relevant:

How does what you say relate to the problem?
How does this information relate to the question we are asking?
What will help us solve the problem?
How does what you say relate to what we are talking about?
How does this relate to our purpose?

QURANIC CHAPTER 27: THE ANT (AL-NAML)
SIGNS 27:67-27:82

Makkah: *And those who were ungrateful said:*
When we had been earth dust like our fathers
will we, truly, be ones who are brought out? (27:67)
Certainly, we were promised this, we and our fathers before.
Truly, this is nothing but fables of the ancient ones. (27:68)
Say: Journey through the earth;
then, look on how had been the Ultimate End
of the ones who sin. (27:69)
And feel you not remorse for them,
nor be troubled by what they plan. (27:70)

And they say: When is the promise if you had been
ones who are sincere? (27:71)
Say: Perhaps coming close behind you be some
of that which you seek to hasten. (27:72)
*And, truly, **your** Lord is Possessor of Grace for humanity,*
but most of them give not thanks. (27:73)
*And, truly, **your** Lord knows what their breasts hide*
and what they speak openly. (27:74)
Not is that which is absent in the heaven and the earth,
but that it is in the clear Book. (27:75)
Truly, this, the Quran, relates about the Children of Jacob and
most of what they are at variance in it. (27:76)
And, truly, it is a guidance
and a mercy for the ones who believe. (27:77)
*Truly, **your** Lord will decree between them*
with His determination.
And He is The Almighty, The Knowing. (27:78)
*So put **your** trust in God.*
*Truly, **you** are on The Clear Truth.* (27:79)
*Truly, **you** will not cause the dead to hear*
*nor will **you** cause to hear the unwilling to hear*
the calling to them when they turned
as ones who draw back. (27:80)
*Nor will **you** be one who guide*
the unwilling to see out of their fallacy.
***You** will not cause to hear, but whoever believes in Our signs*
and so they are ones who submit to God. (27:81)
And when the saying fell on them,
We will bring out a moving creature for them from the earth
that will speak to them, that:
Humanity had not been certain of Our signs. (27:82)

COMMENTARY°

This: *And those who were ungrateful said: When we had been earth dust like our fathers will we, truly, be ones who are brought out?* (27:67) has always been the most difficult point for the ungrateful to accept. Could it be true that after life has departed from us, and our bodies have decomposed and been reduced to dust and ashes, which happens to all people within a certain period of their burial apart from some exceptional cases, we will be brought back to life? Is it true that we and our forefathers, who died long before us, will be raised up from the earth when we have become part of its dust?

The ungrateful followed this absurdity with ridicule: *Certainly, we were promised this, we and our fathers before. Truly, this is nothing but fables of the ancient ones.* (27:68) They were fully aware that earlier messengers had warned their forefathers in the past, which indicates that those Arabs were not totally unaware of faith. Rather, they thought that such promises had not been fulfilled. Therefore, they discarded the new promise, describing it as fables circulated among ancient people which Muhammad then revived. They forget that the Day of Judgment arrives at the time appointed for it, and it will neither be put forward because people hasten it, nor delayed to fulfil their hopes.

At this point, the section directs the ungrateful to turn their minds to the end met by earlier communities which, like them, denied the warnings given by God's messengers. These are described here as the guilty ones: *Say: Journey through the earth; then, look on how had been the Ultimate End of the ones who sin.* (27:69)

Having given this directive to the ungrateful, the section spells out God's order to the Prophet to leave them to their destinies. He was not to feel distressed at what they might be scheming. They would not be able to cause him any harm. Nor was he to grieve for them, because he had already done his duty, delivering God's message and warning them against what fate awaits them: *And feel you not remorse for them, nor be troubled by what they plan.* (27:70) This sign tells us of the Prophet's compassion. He grieved over what could happen to his people, because he knew what had happened to earlier communities that rejected God's messages. The sign also tells us how wicked their scheming was against the Prophet, his message and followers.

The section continues its discussion of what the ungrateful said about resurrection and their refusal to take the warnings of God's impending punishment seriously: *And they say: When is the promise if you had been ones who are sincere?* (27:71)

In a short sign, the section gives the impression of the forthcoming horror, imparting a touch of ridicule to their attitude: *Say: Perhaps coming close behind you be some of that which you seek to hasten.* (27:72) Thus the section strikes fear in their hearts and makes them worry about the impending punishment.

Perhaps one of the most important aspects of God's bounty is that He allows people respite when they do wrong or fail to do what is required of them. *And, truly, your Lord is Possessor of Grace for humanity, but most of them give not thanks.* (27:73) He does not hasten His punishment, giving them chance after chance to reflect on

their positions, repent of their mistakes, and turn back to the right path. Nevertheless, most of them are ungrateful for the grace God bestows on them. Rather, they ridicule the whole idea and hasten their own punishment, or continue in their erring ways, refusing to reflect and take heed. *And, truly, **your** Lord knows what their breasts hide and what they speak openly.* (27:74) He gives them this respite although He is fully aware of the feelings they harbour in their hearts as also what they declare by word and deed. This means that respite is given them in the full knowledge of their actions and feelings. Yet they will inevitably have to face the reckoning of all this.

This round concludes with a statement emphasizing God's perfect knowledge that overlooks nothing anywhere in the universe: *Not is that which is absent in the heaven and the earth, but that it is in the clear Book.* (27:75)

Having emphasized the point of God's perfect knowledge, the section moves on to speak about the Children of Jacob's differences on fundamental issues. What the Quran states about these is part of God's knowledge, and it provides the final, indisputable word on them. It is an example of how God judges between people in dispute. This is stated so as to provide some comfort to the Prophet for he is instructed to leave them to God, who will judge between them as He pleases: *Truly, this, the Quran, relates about the Children of Jacob and most of what they are at variance in it. And, truly, it is a guidance and a mercy for the ones who believe. Truly, **your** Lord will decree between them with His determination. And He is The Almighty, The Knowing. So put **your** trust in God. Truly, **you** are on The Clear Truth. Truly, **you** will not cause the dead to hear nor will **you** cause to hear the unwilling to hear the calling to them when they turned as ones who draw back. Nor will **you** be one who guides the unwilling to see out of their fallacy. **You** will not cause to hear, but whoever believes in Our signs and so they are ones who submit to God.* (27:76-27:81)

This Quran which supersedes all books revealed before it provides the final word on all disputes between their followers. Still the idolaters in Arabia argued about it. It is as God describes it: *And, truly, it is a guidance and a mercy for the ones who believe.* (27:77)

The Quranic method of remoulding hearts and souls in accordance with pure, undistorted nature is indeed unique. It establishes harmony between human life, the universe and the major laws of nature operating in it. This enables us to live in peace and reassurance because we realize that we live in a world whose laws and forces are at peace with us. We know that the overall law that runs the universe

is the same as that which controls our life. With such harmony and peace between our soul and the great existence around us, peace is generated within the community and among humanity at large. Reassurance and stability become a reality in human life. This is "mercy" in its most comprehensive form. This quick reference to God's grace represented in the revelation of the Quran is followed by an assurance to the Prophet that God will judge between him and his community on the basis of His perfect knowledge: *Truly, **your** Lord will decree between them with His determination. And He is The Almighty, The Knowing.* (27:78)

God has made the triumph of the truth a natural law similar to that of the creation of the heavens and the earth and the succession of night and day. It never fails. It may be slow in coming, but this will only be because of a particular purpose known to God which will ensure the fulfilment of certain goals known to Him. Yet still the law remains in operation, and God's promise is certain to be fulfilled. Indeed, no one's faith is complete unless one believes in its certainty. What we need to know is that God's promise will come to pass at the moment appointed for it, and it will neither be hastened nor delayed: *So put **your** trust in God. Truly, **you** are on The Clear Truth.* (27:79)

The section continues to comfort the Prophet so that he bears with patience the stubborn rejection by the ungrateful, despite his strenuous efforts giving them sound advice and addressing them with the Quran. He is told that he has not slackened in his duty, but he can make only those with beating hearts hear. These are the ones who listen attentively, and their hearts are moved so as to respond to the Prophet who gives them honest and sound counsel. By contrast, those whose hearts are dead and who are blind to all the pointers to the truth of faith are a lost case. There is simply no access to their hearts. Therefore, the Prophet should not worry about their persistent error: (27:80-27:81)

In contrast to the dead, unhearing and unseeing, we see the Prophet and those who follow him alive: *Nor will **you** be one who guides the unwilling to see out of their fallacy. **You** will not cause to hear, but whoever believes in Our signs and so they are ones who submit to God.* (27:81) These are the ones whose hearts are ready to receive God's revelations. They have life and they warm to it, feeling its presence. They benefit by what they hear and see. Such are the believers and the Prophet's duty is to make them hear, pointing to the signs God has placed all around us. They will then accept what he tells them and submit themselves to God.

And when the saying fell on them, We will bring out a moving creature for them from the earth that will speak to them, that: Humanity had not been certain of Our signs. (27:82) The same is mentioned in many hadith, some of which are authentic, but these do not give any description of it. There are descriptions of it in other hadith which do not aspire to any reasonable degree of authenticity. Therefore, they should be discarded. It is better by far to limit ourselves to the text of the Quran and the authentic hadith which tell us that the appearance of the beast is a presage of the Day of Resurrection. It is when the time for repentance has expired and judgment is due on those who rejected the faith that God will bring forth this beast to speak to them. Beasts normally do not speak, or rather their languages are not understood by humans. However, at this point people will understand what this beast says, and they will know that it is a miracle that heralds the Last Hour. But they were keen to deny God's signs and the Day of Resurrection.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 27:67-27:82

WHO IS GOD?

God is the Possessor of Grace for humanity.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Prophet is told to ask if the ungrateful have not journeyed throug the earth to see the end of those who sin. He is told not to feel remorse f them nor to be troubled by their plan. He is told to say that perhaps the punishment which they seek to hasten is close at hand. He is told: **Your** Lord, Muhammad, knows what is in their breasts and what they hide. **Your** Lord, Muhammad will decree between them so put your trust, Muhammad, in God. **You**, Muhammad, are on The Clear Truth. **You**, Muhammad, will not cause the dead to hear nor the unwilling to see, to see, nor the unwilling to hear, to hear. **You**, Muhammad, will not be one who guides the unwilling to see out of their fallacy. **You**, Muhammad, will not cause to hear except those who believe in Our signs and they are ones who submit to God (*muslim*).

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The ungrateful say: Will we be resurrected when we are earth dust like our fathers? We and our fathers were promised this before, but it is nothing but fables of the ancient ones. They ask: When is the promise of the Day of Resurrection if you are sincere? When the Day comes, God will bring out a moving creature from the earth who will speak to them saying: Humanity had not been certain of Our signs.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message explains that a moving creature will speak to them. What will this moving creature say? It will say that humanity had not been certain of God's signs. This is a sign of the Last Days. A moving creature will speak to humanity. This will be a time when repentance has expired and judgment will be due on all including those who rejected God's signs. There will be a Day of Reckoning.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I understand what a rhetorical question is.
I realize the importance of the Quran saying that no one will bear the results of another person's actions.
It is an important Quranic concept that each person is responsible for their own beliefs and actions.

LESSON 48(3). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
GIVING REASONS AND EVALUATING EVIDENCE

Quranic critical thinkers have learned on which evidence to base their conclusion. They can insightfully discuss evidence relevant to the issue or conclusions they consider. They scrutinize and evaluate factual claims.

QUESTIONS THAT EXPLORE REASONS AND EVIDENCE (INFORMATION)•

On what evidence is this conclusion based?
Where did we get the evidence?
How could we find out what other evidence exists?
What evidence supports opposing views?
Is the evidence sufficient or do we need more?
Is there reason to question this evidence?
What makes it questionable? Acceptable?
Does another view account for this evidence?
Why do you think that is true?
Do you have any evidence for that?
What difference does that make?
What are your reasons for saying that?

While there are those who wish to discredit the Prophet and his relationship to his wives, the evidence of his character can be evaluated by his relationship with Khadija.

The Prophet was a man who showed great strength of will and speech, whose sword was feared by all the caesars, kings and powerful rulers of that time. His enemies trembled before his anger. At the same time, he was a most sensitive person. His heart beat with kindness. His spirit was excited by the slightest touch of truth, sincerity and kindness.

The Prophet never tried to show himself different from others. Rather, it was the opposite. He would say, "I am a human being like you. The only difference is the revelation which I receive." He always declared that he did not know the hidden world and other than that which was told him, he knew nothing. He always tried not to stand out or seem peculiar and, as far as possible, not to call attention to himself.

One day an old woman approached him to ask him something. All the things that she had heard about him and the greatness she knew he had, so affected her that when she found herself in his presence, she trembled and stuttered. The Prophet, who sensed that she had been struck by his presence, moved simply and quietly forward. He placed his hand kindly upon her shoulder and in a gentle and in-

timate tone, said, "Mother. What is it? I am the son of that Quraysh woman who milked sheep."

The depth of his sensitivity, sympathy and the softness of his heart was most amazing. Sometimes, inside the house, he would so humble himself that the hands of little Ayisha easily reached him.

The first woman, whom he met at the height of his youth and whom he married was Khadija, a widow aged forty, married twice previously and twice widowed, with children the same age as the Prophet. The Prophet spent his youth and even maturity with her. In the twenty-five years that he spent with her, no other woman entered his life. It should not be forgotten here that the Prophet during this interval was a young man. He, like the other youths of the Quraysh, was not constrained by social prestige, moral impediment, the burden of political and military responsibilities, old age, or the especially momentous responsibility of prophethood. All of these assailed him later on, tied him down, and made him a stranger to passion. It is astonishing that the son of Abd Allah who was a normal youth without responsibility, a man who until the age of fifty remained with a widow fifteen years his senior, did not even once during this span nourish the thought of another woman.

QURANIC CHAPTER 27: THE ANT (AL-NAML)
SIGNS 27:83-27:93

Makkah: *And on a Day We will assemble a unit out*
of every community
of whoever denies Our signs
and they will be marching in rank. (27:83)
Until when they drew near, He will say:
Denied you My signs without comprehending them in knowledge,
or what is it that you had been doing? (27:84)
And the saying will fall on them because they did wrong.
And they will speak nothing for themselves. (27:85)
Considered they not?
We made the nighttime for them to rest in it
and the daytime for ones who perceive.
Truly, in that are signs for a folk who believe. (27:86)
On a Day on which the trumpet will be blown,
whoever is in the heavens will be terrified
and whoever is on the earth, but him whom God willed.
And all will approach Him
as ones who are in a state of lowliness. (27:87)

And you will see the mountains you assume
to be that which are fixed.
But they will pass by as the passing of the clouds.
This is the handiwork of God Who created everything very well.
Truly, He is Aware of what you accomplish. (27:88)
Whoever drew near with benevolence,
for him will be better than it
and they would be from the terror
ones who are safe on that Day. (27:89)
And whoever drew near with evil deeds,
they would be slung on their faces in the fire:
Are you given recompense
but for what you had been doing? (27:90)
Truly, I was commanded to worship the Lord of this land
which He made sacred and to Whom everything belongs.
And I was commanded that I be
among the ones who submit to God (27:91)
and to recount the Recitation. So whoever was truly guided, then,
he is truly guided only for himself.
And to whoever went astray say:
Truly, I am among the ones who warn. (27:92)
And say: The Praise belongs to God.
He will cause you to see His signs and you will recognize them
Your Lord is not One Who is Heedless of what you do. (27:93)

COMMENTARY°

The section proceeds from this forerunner of the Day of Judgment to the scene of resurrection and gathering: *And on a Day We will assemble a unit out of every community of whoever denies Our signs and they will be marching in rank.* (27:83) All humanity will be gathered on that day, but the section highlights here the position of those denying revelations. It shows them as they are driven in ranks, altogether, having no say or choice in the direction they have to go.

The first question is one of reproach, because it is already known that they denied God's revelations, while the second is sarcastic. *Until when they drew near, He will say: Denied you My signs without comprehending them in knowledge, or what is it that you had been doing?* (27:84) This combination is used in spoken language making the second question imply that they took no particularly noticeable action in their lives, apart from their denial of God's revelations. Such a question receives no answer; those to whom it is put stand speech-

less: *And the saying will fall on them because they did wrong. And they will speak nothing for themselves.* (27:85) They deserve such a fate because of the wrongdoing in their lives on earth. They are unable to speak, while the beast has already spoken. What a contrast drawn in the Quranic expression and also in the great signs being described in the Quran.

The presentation in this round follows a special pattern, setting scenes from this life against those from the life to come, moving from one to the other at the moment when it is particularly effective. Here the section leaves those who denied God's revelations as they stand speechless on the Day of Resurrection to draw a scene of this world which should have awakened their consciences and invited them to reflect on the universe and its creation. They should have thought of this and realized that God takes care of them, providing them with what enables them to have comfortable lives, making the universe around them suitable for life, not hostile to it: *Considered they not? We made the nighttime for them to rest in it and the daytime for ones who perceive. Truly, in that are signs for a folk who believe.* (27:86)

Then the trumpet is blown a second time bringing them all back to life. It is then blown again to gather them all together: *On a Day on which the trumpet will be blown, whoever is in the heavens will be terrified and whoever is on the earth, but him whom God willed. And all will approach Him as ones who are in a state of lowliness.* (27:87)

This is now the day of reckoning when all that you have done is reckoned. It is the day set by God who has ordered all things to perfection: it has come at the time set for it, with no hastening or delay. It fulfils its role in God's method of creation and planning. It brings harmony between action and reward in the two closely linked lives. *And **you** will see the mountains **you** have assumed to be that which are fixed. But they will pass by as the passing of the clouds. This is the handiwork of God Who created everything very well. Truly, He is Aware of what you accomplish.* (27:88)

On this fearsome day, security and reassurance are granted only to those who did well in their first life on earth. This is in addition to their reward which exceeds by far everything they did: *Whoever drew near with benevolence, for him will be better than it and they would be from the terror ones who are safe on that Day.* (27:89) To be in security when all are in terror is in itself a great reward. What comes after that is granted by God's grace. These believers feared God in their first life, so He willed that they would have no fear on the Day of Judgment.

This: *And whoever drew near with evil deeds, they would be slung on their faces in the fire* (27:90) is a terrible scene as such people are thrown on their faces into hell. They also suffer further rebuke: *Are you given recompense but for what you had been doing?* (27: 90) They had turned their back on God's guidance, which was presented to them as clearly as night and day; so now their faces are the first to face the fire.

At the end the Prophet is instructed to sum up his call and his method in calling on people to believe. He leaves them to their destiny, which they have chosen for themselves after the issues have been clearly put in front of them. The section concludes, as it started, with praising God, leaving it to Him to show them His signs and to hold them to account for their deeds. (27:91-27:93)

The Arab idolaters used to believe in the sanctity of Makkah and the Sacred House, i.e. the Kabah. Indeed they based their supremacy in Arabia on belief in the sanctity of this House. Yet they did not believe in the Oneness of God who made it sacred and also made it the focus of their lives. Therefore, God's Messenger gives faith its proper value, declaring that he is commanded to worship the Lord of this sacred city, who has no partners. He states the Quranic concept of God's Oneness: the Lord of this city is the Lord of everything: *Truly, I was commanded to worship the Lord of this land which He made sacred and to Whom everything belongs. And I was commanded that I be among the ones who submit to God* (27:91) He also declares that he is bidden to be one of those who surrender themselves totally tc God. No one else has any claim on them. They are a group of their own stretching over countless generations, sharing their belief in God and surrendering themselves to Him.

Such is the essence of his message, while its essential means is the recitation of the Quran: *And to whoever went astray say: Truly, I am among the ones who warn.* (27:92) The Quran is the book of this message, and also its constitution and method. The Prophet has been ordered to strive against the ungrateful by means of the Quran, because it is sufficient as a means to address hearts, minds and souls. It contains what overpowers souls, influences feelings, and violently shakes hearts. Fighting was permitted at a later stage to defend believers, ensure the freedom for God's message to address people with the Quran, and to implement the divine law. As for calling people to faith, the Quran itself is sufficient: *And to whoever went astray say: Truly, I am among the ones who warn.*(27:92)

This: *And say: The Praise belongs to God. He will cause you to see His signs and you will recognize them.* (27:93) is by way of in-

troducing what is to come concerning God's own making. *Your Lord is not One Who is Heedless of what you do.*(27:93) God certainly says the truth. Every day He shows His servants some of His signs within themselves and in the great expanse of the universe. He reveals to them some of the secrets at work in the universe.

This is the final note in the section, expressed gently yet imparting an awesome sense. They are then left to do what they want, prompted by the profound note: Your Lord is never heedless of what you do.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 27:83-27:93

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Prophet says: I was commanded to worship the Lord of this land which He made sacred and to Whom everything belongs. I was commanded that I be among the ones who submit to God (muslim) and to recount the Recitation (Quran). Whoever is truly guided is guided for himself. He was told to say to whoever goes astray: Truly, I am among the ones who warn. The Praise belongs to God. He will cause members of community to see His signs and those members will recognize them. **Your** Lord, Muhammad, is not heedless of what you do. On the Day when the trumpet is blown, **you**, Muhammad, will see the mountains you, Muhammad, assume to be fixed, passing by like clouds.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

Those who deny the signs of God will be gathered on that Day, marching in rank. They will be asked: Did you deny My signs without understanding them in knowledge or what is it that you had been doing? They will not be able to respond because of the wrong they had done. The message asks: Did they not consider how the nighttime was made as a time of rest and the daytime for ones who perceive. Whoever draws near the Day with good deeds will be rewarded and free from terror on that Day. Those who did evil deeds will be slung on their faces into the fire.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?

2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message shows what the Prophet is commanded to do. What was the Prophet commanded in these signs? He was commanded to worship the Lord of this land which He made sacred and to Whom everything belongs. He was commanded that he be among the ones who submit to God (*muslim*) and to recount the Recitation (Quran). Those who do good follow what the Prophet was commanded to do. To receive the reward for good deeds, worship the Lord, be among the ones who submit and recount the Quran. These are the ones who will be rewarded with what is better. There will be a Day of Judgment.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I tried to find the key concept of the course during the first couple of class meetings.
I was able to relate that definition to each segment of what I learned afterward.
I realized that fundamental ideas are the basis for all others.

Appendix 1: Correlation between the Present Order of Chapters in the Quran and their Chronological Order

1 = 96
2 = 68
3 = 73
4 = 74
5 = 1
6 = 111
7 = 81
8 = 87
9 = 92
10 = 89
11 = 93
12 = 94
13 = 103
14 = 100
15 = 108
16 = 102
17 = 107
18 = 109
19 = 105
20 = 113
21 = 114
22 = 112
23 = 53
24 = 80
25 = 97
26 = 91
27 = 85
28 =95
29 = 106
30 = 101
31 = 75
32 = 104
33 = 77
34 = 50
35 = 90
36 = 86
37 = 54
38 = 38
39 = 7
40 = 72
41 = 36
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43 = 35
44 = 19
45 = 20
46 = 56
47 = 26
48 = 27
49 = 28
50 = 17
51 = 10
52 = 11
53 = 12
54 = 15
55 = 6
56 = 37
57 = 31
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59 = 39
60 = 40
61 = 41
62 = 42
63 = 43
64 = 44
65 = 45
66 = 46
67 = 51
68 = 88
69 = 18
70 = 16
71 = 71
72 = 14
73 = 21
74 = 23
75 = 32
76 = 52
77 = 67
78 = 69
79 = 70
80 = 78
81 = 79
82 = 82
83 = 84
84 = 30
85 = 29
86 = 83
87 = 2
88 = 8
89 = 3
90 = 33
91 = 60
92 = 4
93 = 99
94 = 57
95 = 47
96 = 13
97 = 55
98 = 76
99 = 65
100 = 78
101 = 59
102 = 24
103 = 22
104 = 63
105 = 58
106 = 49
107 = 66
108 = 64
109 = 61
110 = 62
111 = 48
112 = 5
113 = 9
114 = 110

NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION TO QURANIC THINKING BY HASHIM KAMALI

1. The rough equation that earlier Muslim scholars drew between the Islamic and Western conceptions of reason tended to be oblivious of the categories of reason and the Western critique of reason that divided it into "instrumental reason, critical reason, functional reason, abstract reason, imperialist reason, decentering reason" and the like. For details see Abdelwahab M. Elmessiri, "Features of the New Islamic Discourse," a Cairo conference paper, 1997: http:// www.21stcenturytrust.org/messiri.doc.

2. Some commentators have distinguished a total of 30 expressions that revolve around thinking over the *ayat*. See Abu Bakr al-Razi, *Tafsir al-Kabir* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1985), II, 222f.

3. Cf Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-'Ilm fi'l-Quran al-Karim* (Cairo: Maktaba Wahba, 1416/1996), 36.

4. Al-Isfahani, *Mufradat Alfaz al-Qur'an*, under "*Fikr*".

5. Cf., Karim Douglas Crow, "Islam and Reason" in *Al-Shajarah*, vol. 8, (2003),120-1.

6. Abbas Mahmud, "al-Agqad, Al-Tafkir Faridah Islamiyyah" (Thinking is an Islamic Obligation) quoted in Jamal Badi and Mustapha Tajdin, *Creative Thinking: An Islamic Perspective*, 2nd edn. (Kuala Lumpur: International Islamic University Malaysia, 2005), 6.

7. Cf. al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-'Ilm*, 41-45 quoting ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's *Miftah Dar al-Sa'ada*, and 'Agqad's book entitled *al-Tafkir Faridah Islamiyya* (Beirut: al-Matba'a al-'Asriyya, 1992).

8. Cf. al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-Ilm*, 200.

9. Cf .Ibid., 202.

10. Al-Raghib al-Isfahani, *Mufradat Alfaz al-Quran* (Beirut: Dar al-Shamiyya 1383/1964), 249.

11. Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i, *al-Mizan fi-Tafsir al-Quran* (Beirut: al-Mu'assasa al-'Alami, 1383/1964) II, 395.

12. Ala uddin al-Mattagi al-Hindi, *Kanz al-Ummah fi Sunan al-Aqwal wa'l-Af'al* (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risalah, 1383/1981), hadith no. 5873.

13. Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali, *Risalat al-Radd 'ala al-Laduniyya*, ed. 'Abd Allah Riyad Mustafa, (Damascus: Dar al-Hikma, 1986), 241.

14. CE Ahmad Fu'ad al-Ahwani, *al-Tarbiyah fi'l-Islam* (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif bi-Misr, 1968), 227-228.

15. Cf. Aziz al-Azmeh, *Arabic Thought and Islamic Societies* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 109.

16. Cf. Diane F. Halpern, *Thought and Knowledge: An Introduction to Critical Thinking* (Mahwah: New Jersey, Lawrence Erlbaum and Associates, 1996), 21.

17. Cf. Ibrahim B. Syed, "Critical Thinking" as online at http://www.lrfi. org/articles/articles_101_150/critical_thinking.htm.

(18. Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Lahore: Shah Muhammad Ashraf, reprint 1982), 127.

19. Malik Bin Nabi, *Intaj al-Mustashriqin* (Cairo: Maktabah 'Amir, 1990), 34.

20. Iqbal, op. cit., 139.

21. See for details Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, *What's Right with Islam is What's*

Right with America (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2004), 4-5.

22. Georg W. H. Hegel, *Philosophy of History* (New York: Dove Books, 1956), 109.

23. Louay Safi, "The Creative Mission of the Muslim Minorities in the West: Synthesizing the Ethos of Islam and modernity," a conference paper presented at Westminster University, London, England February 21, 2004: http://insight.org/articles/Current/MuslimMinorities.htm.

24. Cf., M.H. Kamali, "Islam, Rationality and Science," in Islam and Science, vol. 1, no. 2 (2003), 126f, see also Mehdi Golshani, "Philosophy of Science from the Qur'anic Perspective," in *Towards Islamisation of Disciplines* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1989), 73f.

25. Cf. Ishfaq Ahmad, "Research and Development Culture in the Islamic World: Past and Present Problems and Future Directions," in Abu Bakr Abdul Majeed et al. (eds.) *New Knowledge, Research and Development in the Muslim World* (Kuala Lumpur: Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia, 2004), 14-15.

26. See for a discussion Oliver Leaman, "Institutionalising Research and Development Culture in the Islamic and Non-Islamic World: A Comparative Perspective," in Abu Bakr Majeed, (ed.) *New Knowledge*, 50-51.

27. Malik bin Nabi, *Intaj al-Mustashriqin*, 26.

28. See for details Mohammad Hashim Kamali, "Issues in the Understanding of Jihad and Ijtihad" in *Islamic Studies* 41 (2002), 623 ff.

29. There is a chapter on *ijtihad* in M. H. Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1991, 3rd edn. 2003). See also my article "Issues in the Understanding of Jihad and Ijtihad" in *Islamic Studies*, 41 (2002), 617-635; and "Issues in the Legal Theory and Usul and Prospects for Reform" in *Islamic Studies*, 40 (2001), 1-21.

30. Sergio Moravia. *The Enigma of the Mind: The Mind-Body Problem in Contemporary Thought*, tr. S. Staton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. First published in Rome, 1986), 4-5.

31. See for example, Howard Gardner, *Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligence for the 21st Century* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

32. See for details Roger Garudy, "The Balance Sheet of Western Philosophy in this Century" in *Towards Islamisation of Disciplines* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1989), 399f.

33. Mehdi Golshani, "From Knowledge to Wisdom: A Qur'anic Perspective," in *Islamic Studies*, 44 (2005), 13.

34. Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Fiqh al-Awlawiyyat*, 68.

35. Cf., Al-Ahwani, *al-Tarbiyah fi'l-Islam*, 189.

36. Mohammad Hashim Kamali is Professor of Islamic Law and jurisprudence at the International Islamic University Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur. "Reading the Signs," Center for Islam and Science. Gale Group, 2006.

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1. *Usd al-ghabah fi marifat al-sahaba*, III, p 65.
2. *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p 202 1/2.
3. *Tarikh al-Tabari*, p 127.
4. *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p 39.
5. Ali Shariati, *The Countenance of Muhammad.*
6. al-Ghazzali, *Deliverance of Error.*
7. Ali Shariati, ibid.
8. See Introduction.
9. Ali Shariati, ibid.

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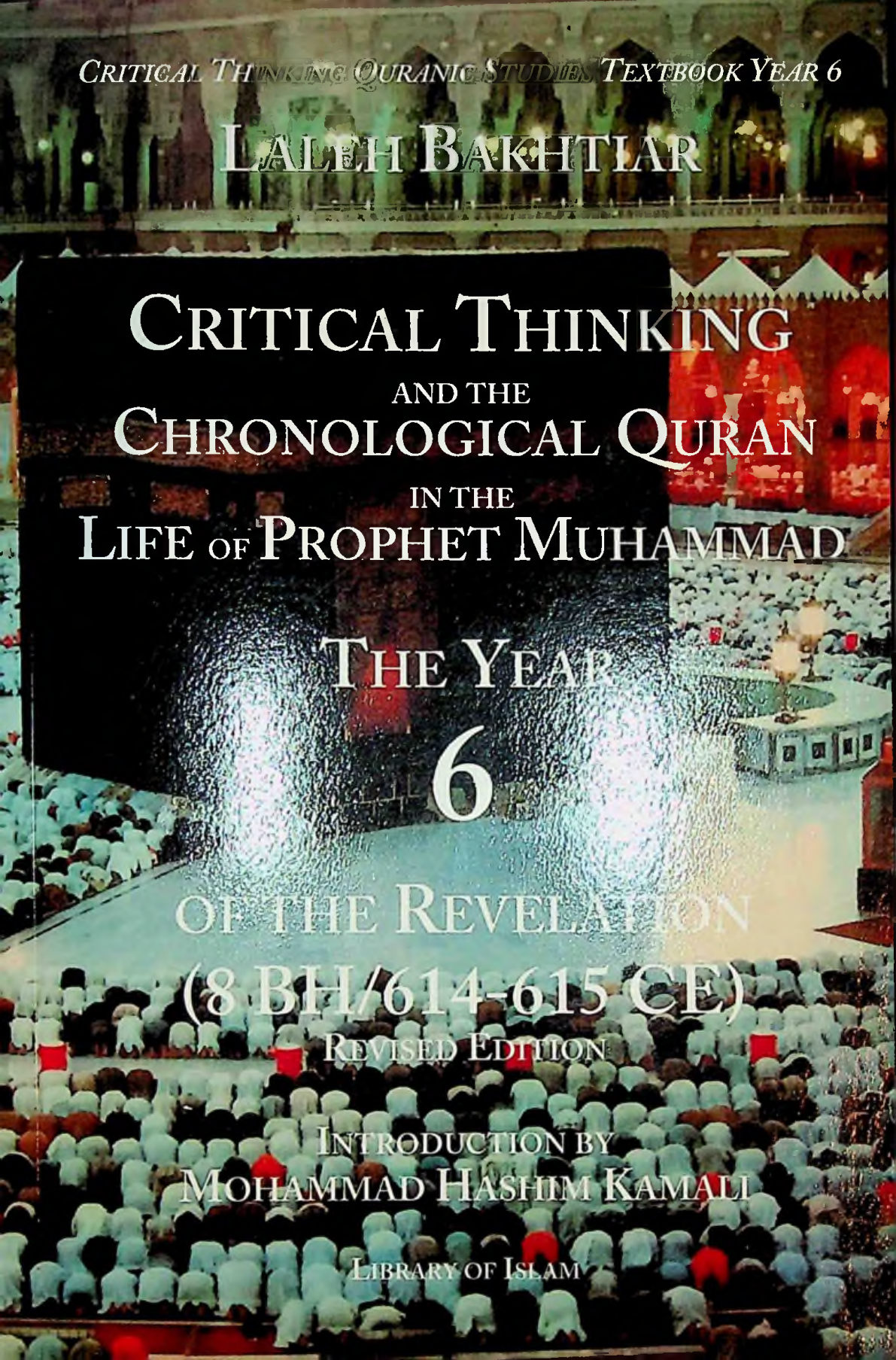
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PREFACE

THE CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STUDIES TEXTBOOK SERIES

There are thirty books in this series. Books entitled *Book Year 1* to *Book Year 24* consist of one book for each year of the revelation. The chapters' or sections' signs (*ayat*) are presented according to the 558 *ruku* or sections of the 114 chapters of the Quran. They each include the relevant chapter (*surah*) or chapters (when they are short) or sections, *ruku* (when there are multiple sections in a particular chapter) in chronological order. The chapters are numbered according to the chronological order of the Quranic chapters provided by al-Azhar University as the officially accepted order of revelation. Each section (*ruku*) is followed by a commentary by one of the well-known commentators.

The Year 6, the present volume, covers events from Muharram 1-Dhu al-Hijja 29, 8 BH/October 11, 614 CE-September 29, 615 CE.

Books 25-28 are devoted to the Quranic stories of all other Prophets and Messengers in order of their dates. *Book 25: Adam, Cain and Abel, Enoch (Idris), Noah, Hud and the People of Aad; Saleh and the People of Thamud; Book 26: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Jacob (Israel), Joseph and Job; Book 27: Moses, Aaron, Children of Jacob (Israel), Jethro (Shuayb), Joshua, Khidr and Samuel; Book 28: David, Solomon, Elijah (Ilyas), Elisha (Alyasa), Jonah (Younis), Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl), Ezra (Uzayr), Dhul Qarnayn (Cyrus the Great or Alexander the Great), Luqman, Zechariah, John the Baptist (Yahya), Mary and Jesus.* The last two are: *Book 29: The Life of Prophet Muhammad from Birth to the Revelation* and *Book 30: Teacher's Manual.* The last, *Book 30,* has been prepared for the teacher's Lesson Plans.

At the beginning of each lesson, there is an exercise in critical thinking skills. These consist of one of the following: **The Nine Intellectual Standards, The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** and **The Seven Moral Traits.** The Eight Elements contain thirty-five strategies. However there is no specific order as to how they should be learned and incorporated into our thinking process.

Once we understand the critical thinking skills and then apply them to the signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. Once the skills as presented in the Quranic message are put into practice with the grace of God, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behavior.

Each lesson is followed by questions for classroom discussion or for dialogue. At the end of each lesson there is an assessment/assignment for students to use while they are developing critical thinking skills as they hopefully learn HOW the Quran teaches critical thinking.

SOURCES

The sources for the history include the works of Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hashim, Waqidi, Ibn Sad and commentaries by Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn, Tustari and Sayyid Qutb. The sources for the commentaries of Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn and Tustari have been used with the permission of the publisher, the Royal Institute of Ahl al-Bayt in Jordan. They are available on their website www.altafsir.com.

The inclusion of excerpted commentaries (tafsir) by Sayyid Qutb's In the Shade of the Quran (available online) in this Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series is because Sayyid Qutb is considered by some extremist groups as their intellectual source. By including excerpts from his eighteen volume Quranic commentary, extremists cannot disclaim the importance of learning critical thinking as this series is to help young adults learn HOW to think using self-realization (tahqiq) and critical thinking (furqan) skills taught by the Quran. This in order to arm young adults with the ability to choose reason over any irrational extremist ideology that is presented to them.

TERMINOLOGY

All Quranic signs are translations from The Sublime Quran. For the Muslim, the Quran is the Word (Logos) of God. It is this Word of God that has inspired artists, artisans, poets, philosophers and writers, those who had been the exponents of Islamic culture and civilization for almost 1500 years. Yesterday and today's Muslim wants to know more about each Word that God chose for His revelation through the Quran. This realization, in turn, prompted the translation of The Sublime Quran, an attempt to give the sense of unity within the revelation to a non-Arabic speaking reader.

There are several points to note about the terminology used in the translation of the Quranic text and the commentaries.

1. The blessed Prophet did not bring a new religion; he came to confirm what was right in the messages of the previous Prophets. Does this translation speak to the universality of the Quran? The Quran tells the Prophet, the mercy to all of humanity, to speak to people in their own language. Following his example, in addition to the translation being unbounded by time, in several sensitive cases, the word chosen to translate an Arabic word is also of a universal or inclusive rather than a particular or exclusive nature. This adds to the broadening of the perspective and scope of the Quran so that it becomes inclusive rather than exclusive to one particular group of people. In other words, in this way a larger audience can relate to its message.

2. The actual word "Islam" comes from the verb, "to submit" (*aslama*), submission (*sallama*), and ones who submit (*muslimun*). The Quran refers to itself (the Quran) from the very beginning of the revelation (68:35).

3. As previously indicated, the four books (Book 25, Book 26, Book 27 and Book 28) are the stories of the other Prophets and Messengers mentioned

in the Quran. While these stories do have lessons to be learned by the Prophet and those who heard the revelations as well as for us today, they do not refer directly to Prophet Muhammad and his prophethood following the beginning of the revelation. What remains in these books of the Quranic signs in the 24 years of the chronological Quran relate directly to him, what he did and what he was told to say. This allows us to understand his life directly from the Quranic message, the Quranic Sunnah, without any interruption of the stories about previous Prophets and Messengers.

4. Most English translations of the Quran refer to the "Children of Israel." The word "Israel" when used in the Quran refers to Jacob, the patriarch of the children who followed him such as Joseph. Therefore, it should be the "Children of Jacob" as it appears in these texts.

5. The words "*kufr*" and "*kafir*" have been translated here as "ingratitude" and "ungrateful" where the context allows. This is the first meaning of the word and many of us in our lifetime have met Muslims who are "ungrateful." It is the ungrateful Muslims who practice intolerance by declaring anyone who says: Peace be upon you (*as-salam alaykum*) as a non-believer (with what is called *takfir*). In those cases, it would not be suitable to call them "unbelievers" or "infidels," but it is clearly appropriate to refer to them as being "ungrateful" and this would include the early Quraysh, ungrateful for God's revelation and prophethood of Muhammad, who ridiculed the Prophet and fought against the Quranic message of love, forgiveness and peace.

6. Yet another example of the use of inclusive language in an attempt to speak to people in their own language, is the use of God instead of Allah. Many English speaking Muslims, as well as many of the English translations of the Quran to date, use Allah when speaking English instead of God. The intention on the part of the speaker is to maintain a sense of piety. They feel that using Allah in English moves them in that direction. Many even claim that the word Allah cannot be translated.

However well-intentioned a person may be, when speaking English, the use of the word Allah instead of God, first of all, does not follow the Quranic verse that tells the Prophet to speak to people in their own language. Subsequently, it does not follow the Sunnah of the Prophet who did speak to people in their own language.

In addition, it creates a divide between Muslims who use the word and the English speaking people of various faiths to whom they are speaking. In effect, it creates the illusion that there is more than One God—Allah and God. The response of the English speaking person of another faith is to say: I do not understand your religion; you have a different God than I do and you call Him Allah.

It needs to be clearly explained to English speaking Muslims that, unlike what they may feel, they do not have a monopoly on the word Allah. Arabic speaking Christians and Arabic speaking Jews also refer to God as Allah. The

Old Testament and New Testament, when translated into Arabic, use Allah for God.

English speaking Muslims, therefore, need to recall the message of the Quran that God is One (tawhid). In addition, the Prophet did not bring a new religion but confirmed what was correct in the messages of previous Prophets, namely, that God is One. Finally, they need to follow the example of the Prophet, as the Quran says he is the model or example to be followed, by speaking to people in their own language.

7. The Arabic language, much like old English, has the second person singular (masculine: anta (where the verb ends in *ka*). The English equivalent is the subject: "thou" or the object: "thee" or the possessive: "thy." As these are no longer in common usage in English, wherever the original Arabic uses one of these terms, the word "**you**" or "**your**" appear in bold font so that the reader knows the original was the second person singular. When the Quran is speaking directly to the Prophet, it uses the pronoun "thee" or "thou" so it is an important distinction to make.

Using you (second person plural) is done to help English speaking readers, recognizing that using the second person plural pronoun you (masculine: *antum* where the verb ends in masculine: *kum*) for God is to intimate that God is plural, the only sin in the Quran that is unforgivable. By putting the pronoun **you** in bold font indicates the true intention.

8. For the Arabic word "ayah," the English word used in these texts is "sign" rather than the Biblical term, "verse."

9. Several of the signs were abrogated over time. However the indication of a sign being abrogated was done after the complete revelation of the Quran. Whether or not a sign was later abrogated does not change the fact that the first Muslims who listened to the Quran, heard the signs that may have later been said to have been abrogated and that a hafez of the Quran recites all the signs as they appear in the original Arabic revealed to the Prophet. Whatever signs scholars later determined to be abrogated are still part of the Quran and, therefore, are not relevant to learning to be a Quranic critical thinker, learning HOW to think.

10. The first number that appears when the Quranic Chapters begin refers to the chapter number in the chronological order of the revelation so that Quranic Chapter 110 which was the last to be revealed is number 114 in the chronological order.

11. It is to be noted that whenever the name of Muhammad, Prophet Muhammad or the Prophet are used, one may say a silent prayer of blessings for him.

CRITICAL THINKING• COMPONENT

Quranic critical thinking (furqan, discernment) is a process that analyzes how we think. It is a 3-step process: **I**: Quranic critical thinkers apply the **Nine Intellectual Standards** (logic, being definitive, connected, appropriate, have worthiness, include numerous viewpoints, have right judgment, clarity, being

fair and just) to: **II: The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** (point of view, purpose, questions, information, inferences, concepts, assumptions, implications): in order to develop: **III: The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** (belief in One God (tawhid), God-consciousness (taqwa), virtuous conduct (birr) or integrity through moral discipline, empowering constancy ('azm) and courage, persevering in goodness (sabara), love (hubb) or empathic altruism (ihsan) and being fair and just (rashad). The signs (ayat) in each section (ruku) teach any or every one of the **Nine Intellectual Standards** or any and every one of the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or any or every one of the **Seven Quranic Moral Traits.**

This is the key to critical thinking. We do not learn "what" to think, but, rather, "how" to think. Using the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** as an example, critical thinking can be summarized in the following sentence: Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** and consequences. We use **concepts,** ideas and theories to **interpret information** (data, facts and experiences) in order to **answer questions,** solve problems, and resolve issues.

The point of view in all cases is that of the Quranic message and the various individuals and groups that it addresses as this series is a course in Quranic Studies as well as a course in the chronological history of the life of the blessed Prophet (sira). Each student is encouraged to come up with his or her own questions and responses to those questions in order to learn how to become the Quranic critical thinker as the Quranic teaches us HOW to think.

It is important to note that there is no correct or incorrect answer. The important point is to go through the process with as many of the sections as one is able to do. Little by little, this will help each student or reader to develop into critical thinkers or "discerners" of the Quranic message creating a bond between them and the Quranic message.

Once we learn to analyze signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. It is important to note that the order of **The Nine Intellectual Standards** or **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or **The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** is not important. With the grace of God, once all are present, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behaviors.

THE NINE INTELLECTUAL STANDARDS

1. LOGIC (REASONABLE: 'AQALA, 'AQL)
2. DEFINITIVENESS (TO BE PRECISE: MUHKAMA)
3. CONNECTEDNESS (CONTAINING COMPLEXITIES AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS: (MUQTARIN)

4. Appropriateness (to make relevant: sadid)
5. Worthiness (Focusing on the important, not trivial, to be significant: ahl)
6. Numerous or Multiple Viewpoints: 'dhara'a)
7. Right Judgment (rushd)
8. Clarity (understandable, to be clear: tabayyana)
9. Being Fair and Just ('aql, right-minded (rashad))

The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies

1. **Embodying a Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective (recollect, bear in mind, take for granted: tadhakkur)**
   - Thinking Independently
   - Developing Insight Into Ego-centricity or Socio-centricity
   - Exploring Thoughts Underlying Feelings and Feelings Underlying Thoughts
   - Developing Intellectual Curiosity
2. **Generating a Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective: (consider: ra'a)**
   - Clarifying Issues or Conclusions
   - Clarifying and Analyzing the Meanings of Words or Phrases
   - Reading Critically: Clarifying or Discerning the Sacred Text
   - Listening Critically: The Art of Silent Dialogue
3. **Raising Questions, Problems, Issues: (reflect: tafakkara)**
   - Practicing Discussion: Clarifying and Questioning Interpretations
   - Reasoning Dialogically: Comparing Interpretations
   - Reasoning Dialectically: Evaluating Interpretations Knowledge, Wisdom
   - Deep Questioning
4. **Using Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments (evidence: basirah)**
   - Developing Criteria for Evaluation: Clarifying Values and Standards
   - Analyzing or Evaluating Actions
   - Distinguishing Relevant From Irrelevant Information
   - Giving Reasons and Evaluating Evidence
5. **Making Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusion, Solutions (understanding: tabassur)**
   - Analyzing or Evaluating Arguments and Interpretations
   - Making Plausible Inferences or Interpretations
   - Recognizing Contradictions
   - Noting Significant Similarities and Differences
6. **Utilizing Concepts, Definitions, Principles, Models and Vocabulary (recall: idhdhakara)**

COMPARING ANALOGOUS SITUATIONS: REFRAMING INSIGHTS TO NEW CONTEXTS
DEVELOPING ONE'S PERSPECTIVE: CREATING OR EXPLORING ARGUMENTS
MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS
COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE
THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING
7. MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PREPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED (OPINIONS: ZUNUN)
8. GENERATING IMPLICATIONS, CONSEQUENCES (PONDER, EVALUATE: TADABBUR)
GENERATING OR ASSESSING SOLUTIONS
EXPLORING IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES IN DETAIL

1. Embodying a **Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective** (Recollect, Bear in Mind, Take to Heart (*tadhakkur*)):Whenever we think, we think within a point of view. What is the Quranic point of view in these signs? Does the Quran follow universal intellectual values of clarity, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, logic, fairness?

2. Generating a **Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective** (Consider (*ra'a*)): My purpose in addressing the Quranic purpose in these signs is . . .? Know exactly what you are after. Make sure you are not operating with a hidden agenda and that your announced and real purposes are the same. Whenever we think, we think for a purpose. What is the Quran's fundamental purpose in revealing these signs? Are there multiple points of view?

3. Raising **Questions, Problems, Issues** (Reflect (*tafakkara*)): What is the key question I am trying to answer. State the question as clearly and precisely as you can. Details are very important.

4. Using **Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments** (Evidence (*basirah*)): Actively seek the information most relevant to the question. Include in that information options for action, both short-term and long-term. We use experiences, facts and data that the Quran gives us. What information does the Quran give in these signs? What information do I need to answer my question?

5. Making **Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusions, Solutions** (Understanding (*tabassur*)): After reasoning (discerning) the above points, decide what the best answer (conclusion) to the question is. What inferences, judgments or conclusions do these signs make? What are my most fundamental inferences or conclusions based on

these Quranic signs?

6. Utilizing **Concepts, Theories, Definitions, Axioms, Laws, Principles, Models, Vocabulary** (Recall (*idhdhakara*)): The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are ... ? Figure out all significant ideas needed to understand and answer your question. You may need to analyze these concepts. Use a good dictionary. Inferences or conclusions are based on Quranic concepts and theories. What is the most basic concept in my question? What Quranic terms have I learned?

7. Making **Assumptions, Presuppositions, Taking for Granted** (Opinions (*zunun*)): Some important assumptions I am using in my thinking are ... ? Figure out what you are taking for granted. Watch out for self-serving or unjustified assumptions. The Quranic point of view is based on some assumptions. What assumptions is the Quran using in its reasoning? What assumptions am I using in my reasoning from the Quranic revelation?

8. Generating **Implications, Consequences** (Ponder (*tadabbur*)): Evaluate options. Take into account the advantages and disadvantages of possible decisions before acting? What consequences are likely to follow from this or that decision? The Quranic assumptions and my assumptions lead to implications and consequences. What are the implications of the Quranic reasoning? What are the implications of my reasoning? Am I correct in understanding the Quranic implications?

THE SEVEN QURANIC MORAL TRAITS

1. BELIEF IN ONE GOD (TAWHID)
2. GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (TAQWA)
3. VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE (MORALLY OBLIGATED: QANATA, GOODNESS, BIRR)
4. EMPOWERING CONSTANCY, COURAGE (AZM)
5. PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS (STEADFAST: SABARA)
6. EMPATHIC ALTRUISM (LOVE, MERCY, COMPASSION: HUBB)
7. FAIRNESS (NOT SELF-SERVING OR EGO-CENTRIC: 'AQSATA)

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Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

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My gratitude also goes to the Center for Critical Thinking and, particularly, the online work done in youtube videos and other works by the educator-founders-members of the Critical Thinking Community, namely, the late Dr. Richard Paul and his wife and constant collaborator, Dr. Linda Elder. All indications of • throughout the text refers to quotes or paraphrases from their excellent work as part of the Critical Thinking Community, www.criticalthinking.org. My attempt has been for all the quotes and paraphrases used here to follow fair copyright use.

Whereas Drs. Paul and Elder may not have used their work in religious educational settings, due to the separation of church and state in the educating of American students, learning from their works it became clear that their teachings can help Muslim students, as well, if their method is presented through the content of the Quran. If Muslim students come to understand that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking, that is, discernment (furqan), HOW to think, they will be armed with the intellectual skills they need to confront Islamic extremism.

One of the main scholars that Islamic extremists use in their propaganda is Seyyed Qutb. In order to further arm Muslim students for any confrontation they may have with Islamic extremists who would quote that their ideas come from Seyyed Qutb, I have used his Quranic commentary, In the Shade of the Quran, in Chapter I of this work. Students will learn how, contrary to what they may be told or taught, in many cases, Seyyed Qutb's commentary (indicated by °) speaks of and describes the way that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking and Islamic extremists cannot say that I have left out their scholars.

Last, but certainly not least, I wish to thank Kazi Publications and its founder, Liaquat Ali, for his constant support and encouragement to forge new areas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqli*) will be passed to young students as they learn of a Muslim world deeply entrenched in Islamic narrative sciences (*al-naqli*).

INTRODUCTION
READING THE SIGNS: A QURANIC PERSPECTIVE ON THINKING
BY MOHAMMAD HASHIM KAMALI

The Islamic notion of *aql* (intellect) embraces the faith dimension of knowledge that is also informed by ethical values. The prevailing reading of the Quran on rationality consists of a coalition of faith and reason which is also cognizant of the metaphysical aspect of reality and the limits, therefore, of human reason. This may be said to be a dividing line between the Islamic and Western conceptions of rationality, especially in its post-Enlightenment context.

Thus, it is not accurate to draw a direct parallel between them, as was the case in the Islamic discourse of the colonial period wherein many Muslim writers greatly admired the Western conception of rationality. The twentieth century Islamic discourse has shown awareness of that difference as it began to comprehend the subtleties inherent in the Western lexicon on rationality and its cultural overtones.[1]

THE DIVINE SIGNS (*AYAT*)

The Quran teaches an essential doctrine of the *ayat* (God's signs in the universe) functioning as pointers to the providential purpose at all levels of creation. Thus the Quran makes frequent references such as 'signs for a people who understand—exercise their intellect'. This evidential role of the divine signs entails an accompanying demand placed upon humans to engage in a rational understanding of the signs and draw conclusions on the discovery of truth and correct guidance.

The human reception of the signs, thus, depends ultimately upon the integrity of reason, without which humans would be incapable neither of comprehending the signs nor of responding to their message. The more abundant is an individual's native endowment of reason, the greater is the possibility for him or her to attain a larger magnitude of understanding and a higher level of response.

The nexus between faith and reason thus constitutes the hallmark of intelligent Islamic spirituality, wherein human intellect and emotions are guided toward harmony with one another. The Quran repeatedly provokes its reciters to think about the signs of God in the universe and within themselves, to understand God's illustrious presence in them, and ultimately to vindicate the truth. The word *ayah* and its plural *ayat* occur in the Quran over 400 times, although the whole of the Quran introduces itself as a collection of *ayat*. To quote the Quran: *We will cause them to see Our signs on the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is The Truth.* (41:53)

And, *On the earth are signs, for the ones that are certain and in yourselves. Will you not, then, perceive?* (51:20-51:21)

God reveals the truth in a variety of ways, some explicit and others by allusion, the latter mainly through the modality of the signs, in order to provoke and engage the human intellect. The signs of God cannot be readjust off the face of the signs but require thinking and reflection. This is indicated in the phrase: *We will cause them to see Our signs* ... which suggests that the signs may not be instantaneously visible to the naked eye. The whole concept of signs seeks to forge a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* (38:29) A sign is also a portent and allusion to something other than itself and should not therefore be seen as the final message and purpose of the revelation containing it.

Approximately 750 verses, or nearly one-eighth of the Quran, exhort the readers to study nature, history, the Quran itself, and humanity at large. The text of the Quran employs a range of expressions in its appeal to those who listen (*yasma'un*), those who think (*yatafakkarun*), those who reflect (*yatadabbarun*), those who observe (*yanzurun*), those who exercise their intellect (*ya'qilun*), those who take heed and remember (*yatadhakkarun*), those who ask questions (*yas'alun*), those who develop an insight (*yatafaqqahun*), and those who know (*ya'lamun*).[2]

These and their derivatives (mostly occurring in the active verbal form) consist essentially of open invocations and encouragement to thinking that is not limited by a methodology or framework. *Meditate they not, then, on the Quran* (*afala yatadabbarun al-Qur'an*) (47:24) *Tadabbur* means concentrated and goal-oriented thinking provoked by the challenge to find something new or to solve a difficult problem.

Quranic references to thinking and the exercise of intellect occur in conjunction with basically five major themes: Belief in the Oneness and generosity of God (*tawhid*); reflection on the Quran; the human being and the universe; historical precedent; and thinking itself.

References to *aql* (intellect) and its derivatives occur on 49 occasions in the text. The typical Quranic expression, *ulu'l-albab* (those who possess vision and understanding), and its synonym, *ulu'l-nuha* (people endowed with intellectual abilities) occur 33 times in the text. Such expressions are frequently juxtaposed with the exposition of signs, such as in the sign: *Thus, God makes manifest His signs to you so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (2:242) or in the sign: *Surely, We made manifest the signs to you so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (57:17). Repeated references to pondering over the signs are variously nuanced such that they embrace within their fold the widest spectrum of people who may be endowed with different intellectual abilities and endowments.[3]

Al-Isfahani defines thought (*al-fikr*) as the power of the mind that facil-

itates access to knowledge (*'ilm*). Thinking (*al-tafakkur*) is the movement of that power which is driven by the intellect (*al-'aql*), and this can only occur when an initial image of the subject is attainable in the mind of the thinker. Thinking cannot, therefore, proceed over something of which no image exists in the mind. This can be said of the self of God, for example, as we have no image on which to focus our thought.[4]

The human being can only think over the attributes of God through the observation of His signs. Broadly speaking, thinking proceeds over the whole of the created universe without any exception; indeed, the Quran repeatedly invites such in respect to both the physical and abstract aspects of reality, both in the present and in regards to bygone history that is only perceived by the intellect rather than sense perception. Often the Quran gives examples, parables, and narratives of other nations, and then follows them with the reminder, usually addressed to the Prophet, to recount the narratives of the past so that the people may think and reflect over them:

And recount to them the tiding of him to whom We gave Our signs. (7:175)

And there are the parables that We propound for humanity so that perhaps they will reflect. (59:21)

Truly, in that are certainly signs for a folk who reflect. (30:21)

A hierarchy of five perceptive-cognitive functions is also suggested, including and extending through hearing, sight, thinking, dhikr remembrance, and certainty.[5]

Given such a scale of intensified perceptive understanding, the Quran propounds the notion of *ulul'l-albab*, the thoughtful individuals who are possessed of proper understanding and response. *'Aql* is thus tied to the cognitive dimension of faith.

Significantly, the very term for reason and intelligence in Arabic, *al-'aql*, has at the core of its basic meaning the practical idea of "restraining" and "binding," that is, of holding one's self back from blameworthy conduct—being an interior self-imposed limit. Quranic commentators understand thinking (*tafakkur, tafkir*) as pondering and reflection, which is a mental activity and process, not an outcome.

Thinking (*tafakkur*) is considered as a form of worship of God if it is done with sincerity and good purpose. *'Aql* in its Quranic conception is also one that conceives the truth, and it is always in search of it. This conception of *'aql* precludes one that is rigid, arrogant, and misleading. Some have also drawn the conclusion from the ubiquitous Quranic emphasis on thinking that all Muslims must strive to be thinking individuals.[6]

Al-Qaradawi has quoted Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's (d. 751/1350) own observation as well as some epithetic statements, the latter narrated from other leading figures to the effect that "thinking for an hour is better than worship of many years," and another statement that "thinking for an hour is superior to a whole night of prayer." To this Ibn Qayyim added that "thinking is the

act of the heart whereas worship is the act of one's limbs, and the former is superior to the latter."

The pious caliph Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz (d. 101/718) is similarly quoted: Thinking over the bounties of God is the best form of worship. Abbas Mahmud al-Agqad went so far as to say that: Thinking—*al-tafkir*—is an Islamic obligation. Just as God Most High ordered us to worship Him by performing prayer and fasting, He also ordered us to think in numerous verses and in so many different ways, all of which vindicate thinking as one of the cardinal messages of the Quran.[7]

The Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge espoused with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression *al-tafaqquh fi'l-din*, that is, understands the religion, signifying a rational and inquisitive approach to constructing a Quranic worldview.

Islam, in other words, advises analytical knowledge and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely dogmatic approach. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions: Faith based on detailed analysis (*al-iman al-tafsili*) as opposed to undigested and uncomprehended faith (*al-iman al-ijmali*). The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the religious scholars of all the leading schools of thought. Thus it is declared in a sign: *But a section of people only that they become learned in the way of life and that they warn their folk.* (9:122).

We also note the distinction between thought-based knowledge and transmitted or received knowledge reflected in the twin juristic and hadith-related expressions of knowledge based on understanding (*'ilm al-diraya*), and report-based and transmitted knowledge (*'ilm al-riwaya*). The former is based on understanding and insight (*diraya wa tafaqquh*) and takes priority over the latter. Whereas *'ilm al-riwaya* relies mainly on memory and retention, *'ilm al-diraya* is based on cognition, understanding, and analysis.

Thus, if there are hadith reports, or any factual reports for that matter, which do not stand to reason and understanding, they would be most likely discounted and abandoned, with the exception only of devotional matters (*'ibadat*) which are based on faith and submission more than on rational analysis.

Another feature of the Quranic vision of thinking is indicated in its emphasis on wisdom and good judgment (*hikmah*) which signifies the quality of thinking, its regard for values, and its outcome. Wisdom and good judgment can easily be said to be more important than technical know-how and expertise, as it can guide expert knowledge as to its proper application and the attainment of excellence.

The Quran mentions *hikmah* twenty times, and in about ten of these it is

immediately preceded by the word Book or *kitab*, which is a reference to divine scripture—primarily the Quran, but also other divinely revealed scriptures. The text, thus, says with reference to Jesus: *And He teaches him the Book and wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel.* (3:48) The juxtaposition of *kitab* and *hikmah* is often contextualized by a reference to the sending of prophets who teach the people and guide them with scripture and wisdom (e.g., *wa yu'allimuhum al-kitaba wa'l-hikmata*) as it is said of the Prophet Muhammad: *And teaches you the Book and wisdom* (2:159) and: *Teaches them the Book and wisdom* (62:2 ff); the descendants of Prophet Abraham: *We gave the people of Abraham the Book and wisdom* (4:54); and of Luqman: *We gave Luqman wisdom* (31:12). The holistic, superior, and indivisible value of *hikmah* in the Quran is underscored in one of its signs to the effect that when God bestows wisdom on someone that person is indeed granted an immense source of goodness: *And whomever is given wisdom, then, surely, was given much good and none recollects no doubt but those imbued with intuition.* (2:269).

To mention *hikmah* together with the Book evidently means that the Quran should be read with wisdom and divorcing the one from the other by taking a totally dogmatic approach to the Quran goes against the divine purpose and intention of its revelation. To read the Quran in the light of *hikmah* thus means a comprehensive reading that reaches beyond the obvious meaning of its words to encapsulate the goal and purpose of its message and then also reflection on the ways and means of how its benefits can be realized for the individual and society.[8]

The repeated juxtaposition of the "Book and *Hikmah*" in the Quran led some commentators, such as the Successor, Qatadah ibn Diama al-Sadusi (d.118 H), Ibn Wahhab, the disciple of Imam Malik (d. 179/795), and the Imam al-Shafii (d. 205/820) himself to the somewhat unusual observation that "*hikmah*" is a reference to the Sunna of the Prophet. Many have taken and followed this view; but since the text does not specify such a meaning for *hikmah*, the word should convey its natural and unqualified meaning as I have depicted in this presentation.

Good judgment, insight, balance and avoidance of extremes, the ability to distinguish between truth and falsehood, and procedural accuracy are commonly associated with *hikmah* and *hikmah* as such becomes a dimension of evaluative thinking in. its Quranic idiom. Besides, when the Quran declares that God Most High endowed the Prophets David and Solomon and also the renowned sage Luqman with *hikmah*, it could not have referred to the Sunna of the Prophet Muhammad, as Sunna as such did not exist in those times.

The Quranic usage of *hikmah* reinforces the holistic quality of thinking. *Hikmah* also seeks to forge a close tie between reason and emotion (*'aql wa qalb*) thereby encouraging what is now known as emotional intelligence. This is how the Quran and also the Sunna often deliver their messages, for, unlike

the modern statutory laws and texts, the Quranic guidance, commands, and prohibitions are often espoused with appeals to the heart and mind of their readers.[9]

Al-Isfahani defined *hikmah* as the realization of the truth through knowledge and intellect and it is manifested in the performance of benevolent deeds.[10] According to another definition: Wisdom signifies comprehension of the truth and reality and the ability to avoid corruption in one's quest to attain perfection."[11]

Random House Dictionary of the English Language similarly defines wisdom as: Knowledge of what is true or right coupled with just judgment as to action. Wisdom is thinking informed by the light of the heart that often leads to action and contemplates its consequences in relationship with other relevant factors. This may strike a note with the renowned hadith in which it is declared that: Fearing God is the pinnacle of wisdom (*ra's al-hikmati makhafat Allah*)."[12]

It is presumably for this reason that the great religions of the world have urged the seekers of knowledge to combine it with wisdom. It is wisdom that confers a higher quality on thinking and helps knowledge to be used for the promotion of good giving it meaning and direction.

In an effort to train the individual to enhance his or her quality of thinking, al-Ghazali (d. 505/1111) discusses the two sources of knowledge that Muslim tradition has recognized. One of these is through human teaching and learning (*al-ta'allum al-insani*) and the other through divine teaching (*al-ta'lim al-rabbani*).

The former is externally transmitted from teacher to student, whereas the latter is conveyed by the Universal Intellect which is superior, more intense, and more effective than human teaching. This knowledge is internally acquired either through revelation (*wahy*), which is a prerogative of the Prophets, or it is acquired through meditation, thinking, and reflection.

Al-Ghazali subscribes to the view that the essence of all knowledge is centered in the inner self of the human person in much the same way as growth potential that is vested in the soil and seed, and it is through teaching that the individual's potential is developed.[13] These two aspects of knowledge, that is, the external and the internal, are complementary to one another. This is because no one can possibly teach or learn from any teacher all the sciences, some of which are learned through teaching but the rest inferred by the reflective thought of the individual. It is therefore important that the avenues of learning remain open both through teaching and through inner reflection, thinking, and illumination. This is another way of saying that all knowledge is acquired and developed through the senses, inner reflection and thinking, both of which partake in natural endowment and development through external transmission and teaching.

Al-Ghazali's views on the internal and external sources of knowledge

tended to correspond with those of Ibn Sina (d. 428/1037), but which differed, at least partially, from those of the second/ninth century Ikhwan al-Safa (c. 373/983). All knowledge, according to the latter, is acquired through the senses and none inheres in human nature. Knowledge that is developed through thought and reflection also originate in the senses. The same analysis is extended to the axiomatic knowledge of postulates that are derived and confirmed through the senses. In support of this theory Ikhwan al-Safa have cited the Quranic verse: *And God brought you out from the wombs of your mothers and you know nothing.* (16:78). All knowledge is therefore acquired knowledge, a view which may strike a closer note with some of the modern theories on the subject.[14]

Muslim thought in the middle ages did not admit the ontological distinction between tangible entities that could be sensuously apprehended and entities of a spiritual or subliminal nature. This may be said to be a more sound and realistic view of reality than is allowed for by the modern positivist doctrines of science. Being is manifested at various levels and in several forms, none of which is less real than the other. Arabic thought employed the notions systematized in Stoic theory that divide being into three locations: Verbal utterance, psychic representation, and reality—without this last in any sense having exclusive title to Being.

Al-Farabi (d. 950 CE) took up this view and assimilated psychic representation to the entities of reason. Others rehearsed this division with the addition of a fourth location, that of Scripture. Reality thus had a four-fold manifestation, depending on whether the subject existed immediately in itself or whether its like was graven in the mind (*dhihn*, psyche) composed of sounds, which together indicates the psychic representation, or was manifested in characters standing for sound and speech. All four have a basic characteristic in common which is existence (*wujud, haqiqah*).[15]

The Islamic and Western perceptions of creative and evaluative thinking both recognize this to be a skill that is developed through training and controlled exercise. It is through training and thinking that we adopt new patterns of perceiving reality that we are able to see differently and creatively. It is generally acceded that creative thinking and critical thinking go hand-in-hand and complement one another. Critical thinking means "involving or exercising skilled judgment or observation." Thinking is critical when it evaluates the reasoning behind a decision. Such evaluation must, however, be carried forth in a constructive manner.[16]

The purpose of critical thinking is to achieve understanding, evaluate viewpoints, and solve problems. In general, one's thinking is likely to become critical when concrete learning experiences precede abstract thought.[17] This strikes a parallel note, in its Islamic idiom, with thinking that is espoused with *hikmah*.

The famous yet controverted hadith: The first (being) God created is the

intelligence (*awwalu ma khalaqa Allahu al-'aqla*), sparked prolonged discussions among Muslim thinkers over many centuries over the implications of this statement. Among the issues debated was the priority of reason over revelation and the respective role of each in their mutual inter-dependence.

Another issue was whether the disparity among humans in respect of reason also affected the modalities of moral obligation. Some prominent thinkers including Abu Bakr al-Razi (d. 313/925) apparently advocated the primacy of reason over the revelation. This would be properly known as "rationalism," which deems the primacy of reason over revelation. This is different from "rationality" which means treating any issue by using reason without giving reason priority.

SOURCES AND INSTRUMENTS OF KNOWLEDGE

Commenting on the Quranic passage quoted earlier, Muhammad Iqbal observed that the Quran regards both self (*anfus*) and world (*afaq*) as sources of knowledge. God reveals His signs in inner as well as outer experience. The Quran thus opens fresh vistas of knowledge in the domain of our inner experience. Mystic experience and intuition, then, however unusual and abnormal, must now be regarded as perfectly natural and open to scrutiny like other aspects of human experience." But inner experience is only one source of human knowledge. The outer experience in the Quran, Iqbal continues on the same page, unfolds two other sources of knowledge—nature and history, and it is in tapping these sources of knowledge that "the spirit of Islam is seen at its best".

The Quran sees the signs of reality in the sun, the moon, the alternation of day and night, the perpetual changes of the winds, the variety of human colors and tongues, and in fact in the whole of nature as revealed to the sense-perception of man. The Muslim's duty is to reflect on these signs and not to pass by them as if he is deaf and blind *They have hearts with which they understand not. And they have eyes with which they perceive not. And they have ears with which they hear not. Those are like flocks. Nay! They are ones who go astray. Those, they are the ones who are heedless* (7:179), for he who does not see these signs in this life will remain blind to the realities of the life to come. The divine signs are observed through sense-perception using mainly the faculties of hearing, sight, and intellect: *Journey they not through the earth? Have they not hearts with which to be reasonable or ears with which to hear?* (22:46) The emphasis in this sign is on the faculty of reason and understanding, suggesting that not all of our information about nature comes directly from sensation, for if that were the case we would be no different from animals.

Frequent references to sense-perception as the principal mode of receiving the signs show the scientific/experimental import of the Quran. The Quran goes even further to suggest sense perception as the only avenue of knowl-

edge, as the text already reviewed provides: *And God brought you out from the wombs of your mothers and you know nothing. And He assigned to you the ability to hear and sight and mind so that perhaps you will give thanks.* (16:78) Knowledge of the signs is therefore acquired through the use of these faculties. In another sign, the Quran praises those who listen to the word and follow the best of it: *Those who listen to the saying of the Quran and follow the fairer of it. Those are those whom God guided. And those, they are imbued with intuition.* (or make the best possible interpretation thereof) (39:18). This sign apparently subjects the data of sense-perception to the exercise of intellectual selection. The text also teaches that sense-perception does not perceive all reality: *So I swear an oath by what you perceive and what you perceive not.* (69:37-69:38). Certainty (*yaqin*) may also be beyond the reach of human intellect, as the human mind may be blurred by the variables of time and space. What is deemed certain today may be uncertain tomorrow.

We also note that according to the teachings of the Quran, the universe is dynamic in its origin, finite, and capable of increase. Early Muslim thinkers do not seem to have grasped the Quranic emphasis on inductive reasoning and experimentation. It was indeed a slow realization for Muslim thinkers to note "that the spirit of the Quran was essentially anti-classical". Putting full confidence in Greek reasoning, Muslim thinkers tried to understand the Quran in the light of Greek philosophy, which in the beginning of their careers they had studied with so much enthusiasm.

The substance of Iqbal's analysis on this subject is also upheld by Malik bin Nabi (1905-1973), who understands the creative impulse of the Quran as the motivating force behind the efflorescence of science at a time when Muslim thinkers began to grasp the full impact of the Quran on experimentation and inductive reasoning.[18]

The dynamic conception of the universe in the Quran is also seen by its conception of life as an evolutionary movement in time. History thus constitutes the third source of knowledge in the Quran. It is one of the most essential teachings of the Quran, as Iqbal has further observed, that nations are collectively judged, and suffer for their misdeeds here and now. The Quran thus constantly cites historical instances, and urges upon the reader to reflect on the past and present experiences of humanity: *Customs passed away before you. So journey through the earth; then, look on how had been the Ultimate End of the ones who deny.* (3:137)

If a wound afflicts you, surely, a wound afflicted the folk similar to that. And these are the days We rotate among humanity so that God knows those who believed and takes witnesses to Himself from among you. (3:140)

And: *And of whom We created there is a community that guides with The Truth, and with it, it is just. And those who denied Our signs, We will draw them on gradually from where they will not know.* (7:181-183)

The Quran's interest in history as a source of human knowledge extends

farther than mere indication of historical generalizations. "It has given us one of the most fundamental principles of historical criticism."[19] Since accuracy in recording facts is an indispensable condition of history as a science, accuracy depends ultimately on those who report them. The reporter's personal character is thus an important factor in judging his testimony. The Quran says *O those who believed! If one who disobeys drew near to you with a tiding, then, be clear so that you not light on a folk out of ignorance.* (49:6). It is the application of the principle embodied in this sign to the reporters of the Prophet's traditions out of which were gradually evolved the canons of historical criticism.

A scientific treatment of history, however, requires a wider experience, a greater maturity of practical reason, and a fuller realization of certain basic ideas regarding the nature of life and time. These are in the main three, and taken together they constitute the foundation of Quranic teaching.

(1) The unity of human origin: The Quran states: *He creates you from one soul.* (39:6) And: *O humanity! Be God-conscious of your Lord Who created you from a single soul.* (4:1). But the perception of life as an organic unity is a slow achievement. Islam sowed the germ of this aspiration and it became a Quranic assignment of us to work towards its realization. Notwithstanding the fact that Christianity, long before Islam, brought the message of equality to humanity, the Roman Empire had no more than a general and abstract conception of human unity.

On the other hand, the growth of territorial nationalism in Europe has tended to stifle the broad human element in the art and literature of Europe. European colonialism was also inspired by a self-image of superiority. Europe assumed a superior image that non-European peoples could be freely dominated, exploited, and subjugated.[20] It was quite otherwise with Islam. The impulse of Islam was from the outset to make the idea of human unity a living factor in the Muslim experience that was to be taken towards fuller fruition.

(2) A keen sense of the reality of time, and the concept of life as a continuous movement in time: The Quranic view of the alternation of day and night as a sign of the ultimate Reality which appears in a fresh glory every moment and the tendency in Muslim metaphysics to regard time as objective—all this constituted the intellectual heritage and ideals of Islam.

(3) The merger between religious and secular values: This is a unique feature of Islamic thought which is distinguished by its attempt to bring harmony between them, probably for the first time in history. It was in the state of Madinah that we encounter a clear example where universally proclaimed moral values formed the criteria of political judgment. Political leaders and statesmen were expected to recognize not only the value of efficiency, but also of justice, human dignity, equality, and freedom. In his renowned *Philosophy of History*, Hegel (1770-1831) recognized that the unity between the secular and the spiritual took place in Islamic society and civilization long be-

fore it made any impact in the modern West: We must therefore regard (the reconciliation between the secular and spiritual) as commencing rather in the enormous contrast between the spiritual religious principles, and the barbarian Real World. For spirit as the consciousness of an inner world is, at the commencement, itself still in the abstract form. All that is secular is consequently given over to rudeness and capricious violence. The (Muslim) principle, the enlightenment of the oriental world, is the first to contravene this barbarism and caprice. We find it developing itself later and more rapidly than Christianity; for the latter needed eight centuries to grow into a political form.[21]

The modern West followed the example of the historical Islamic world in demanding that holders of political power operate under a set of moral rules. But as the modern West harmonized the secular and religious only nationally, the international realm was free to operate under the dynamics of power politics and secular rudeness. This failure was a cause of the senseless violence that claimed over 100 million war victims in the twentieth century. Recognition of the danger of the purely secular politics led to the creation of the United Nations, yet even this effort was undermined by political realists who enjoyed a disproportionate sway among the political pundits of Europe and America.

Safi has rightly noted the irony that contemporary Muslim societies have unfortunately followed a similar course in decoupling the secular and the religious and now find themselves entangled in a crisis of legitimacy. Many Muslim regimes are driven by the logic of power and operate outside the realm of moral correctness. It is alarming to see that this decoupling has impacted the religiously inspired movements, which seem to succumb to the logic of power in their readiness to employ amoral--even immoral--strategies in their fight against political corruption and oppression.[22]

OBSTACLES TO CORRECT REASONING

The Quranic emphasis on pondering over the signs is also underscored by a set of guidelines to ensure a correct outcome of reflection and thinking over them. The text thus draws attention to a series of exclusions and factors that stand in the way of the proper functioning of intellect:

(1) Pursuit of caprice (*hawa*) which may consist of love, hatred, pomposity and prejudice that confound impartiality and sound judgment: *Had you considered he who took to himself his own desire as his god and whom God caused to go astray out of a knowledge, sealed over his having the ability to hear and his heart and laid a blindfold on his sight? Who, then, will guide him after God? Will you not, then, recollect?* (45:23)

And if you had followed their desires after what drew near you of the knowledge, there is not for you from God either a protector or a helper. (2:120)

But if they respond not to you, then, know that they only follow their own desires. (28:50)

And: *And obey not him whose heart We made neglectful of Our Remem-*

brance and who followed his own desires and whose affair had been excess. (18:28)

The choice is between two alternatives: caprice (*hawa*) and guidance (*huda*); the former evidently renders obscure one's attempt to attain the latter.

(2) Pursuit of conjecture in the face of certitude: And surely conjecture (*al-zann*) avails nothing against the truth (*al-Haqq*). *And most of them follow nothing but opinion. Truly, opinion avails them not against The Truth at all.* (10:36)

And follow up not of what there is not for you knowledge of it. Truly, having the ability to hear and sight and mind, each of those will have been that which is asked. (17:36) Knowledge and truth stand in contradistinction with the pursuit of conjecture. Note that the text says one should not follow conjecture until it is established and elevated to the rank of knowledge. It does not say that one should avoid conjecture altogether. In another place, conjecture occurs side by side with *hawa* or that which they themselves desire: *They follow nothing but opinion and that for which their souls yearn.* (53:23) This is the kind of conjecture or opinion that is meant.

Knowledge is established by sense-perception that often begins with a measure of speculation and doubt but which is affirmed by the light of reason and conviction. Some commentators maintain that the main context for this guideline is religion: Thus it is said that one should not take speculative positions in matters of belief. As for scientific enquiry and pursuit of knowledge, conjecture is neither discouraged nor avoidable.[23]

The ultimate purpose of this engagement is to attain the truth. Once the truth is attained, one should then commit oneself to it and observe it: *And what else is there after The Truth but wandering astray. Where, then, turn you away?* (10:32)

Completed was the Word of your Lord in sincerity and justice. There is no one who changes His Words. (54) (6:115).

(3) Blind imitation of others: The correct exercise of reason in Islam is tied to personal conviction as opposed to indiscriminate following of others, hallowed custom, and precedent. These must be judged in the light of reason and abandoned if found deviant and misleading: The misguided will say, as the Quran provides: *Nay! We will follow whatever we discovered our fathers were following on it —even though their fathers had been not at all reasonable—nor are they truly guided.* (2:170)

And: *Enough is what we found our fathers upon. Even though their fathers had been knowing nothing nor are they truly guided?* (5:104)

This was the response that Prophet Abraham and other great prophets received from their detractors, but the text address them again and again that both you and your ancestors were clearly misguided. *Certainly, We gave Abraham his right judgment before. And We had been ones who know of him when he said to his father and his folk: What are these images to which you be ones*

who give yourselves up to? They said: We found our fathers as ones who are worshippers of them. He said: Certainly, you and your fathers had been in a clear wandering astray.(21:51-21:54)

Forsake those who took to themselves their way of life as a pastime and as a diversion and whom this present life deluded. (6:70)

*Is it that **your** formal prayer commands **you** that we leave what our fathers worship?* (11:87)

As we shall presently elaborate, indiscriminate imitation of others is widely held to be the single most damaging cause of the decline of creative thinking among Muslims.

(4) Oppressive Dictatorship: The Quran takes to task arrogant dictators and those who support them and follow them. Hence the plea of those who say: *Our Lord! Truly, we obeyed our chiefs and our great ones. They caused us to go astray from the way* (33:66) should be of no merit. In a number of other places the text denounces the Pharaoh and Karun for their oppressive ways who misled their people in rejecting the guidance that was conveyed to them. *Pharaoh and his Council but they followed the command of Pharaoh. And the command of Pharaoh was not well-intended.* (11:96)

DECLINE OF CRITICAL THINKING

I shall not retrace well-documented history that Muslim thinkers were pioneers in the creation of new knowledge. It was due to the impact of the Quran that, in contrast to the Greeks who excelled in deductive method of reasoning and logic, Muslim scientists distinguished themselves in inductive and experimental approaches to scientific enquiry. The golden period of Muslim science started around 700 AD and lasted until about 1350 AD. Great thinkers such as Ibn Sina, Jabir ibn Hayyan, Abu Bakr Zakarriya al-Razi, Abu Rayhan al-Biruni, Ibn al-Nafis al-Dimashgi, al-Khawarizmi, and many others have left a rich legacy of contributions to the advancement of sciences in anatomy, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, optics, etc.[24]

After the fourteenth century creative thinking began to decline in the Islamic world due to a variety of factors, including the Mongol invasion and burning of Baghdad, the defeat of the Muslim Arabs in Spain and the continuing crusades, the collapse of the Ottoman caliphate, and the ensuing onslaught of European colonialism. The creative impulse of Islamic thought suffered setbacks as a result. Muslims were also beset with many internal problems including the alienation of philosophers, scientists, and thinkers from the theologians, sectarian controversies, and the prevalence of intellectual conservatism and imitation of past authority (*taqlid*)).

Philosophy and the sciences fell into a rapid decline while more rigid forms of instruction and narrower curricula prevailed. It was argued that orthodoxy was being threatened and that there was a need to restrain thinkers in order to defend religion. The latitude and diversity of discourse that expanded

the scope of religious sciences, theology (*kalam*), commentary (*tafsir*), hadith, and jurisprudence (*fiqh*) gave way to narrower criteria of *kufr*, *bidah*, and *taqlid* and the so-called closing of the door of *ijtihad* (*sadd bab al-ijtihad*).[25]

More recently, a certain abuse of Islamic authority operated by a dogmatic radicalism has exacerbated the decline of creative thought among Muslims. The situation is not helped by the prevalence of passivity in popular culture concerning the dogmatic excesses of these ardent proponents of imitation of past authority (*taqlid*). One of the salient features of this mindset is a certain ignorance of the essential impulse of the Quran on creative thought. Malik bin Nabi put it succinctly that the crisis of a civilization and a society at a critical point of its history "is not the paucity of its material objects but the poverty of its ideas."[26]

WHAT IS *IJTIHAD*?

The Quranic appeal to rational thinking and enquiry is not restrained by the methodology of *ijtihad*. There is, in fact, no clear text on *ijtihad*[27] in the Quran. *Ijtihad* as a concept originates in the hadith of the Prophet and the practice and precedent of companions. The methodology of *ijtihad* which is the basic theme of the science of the sources of law (i.e. *usul al-fiqh*) is itself a product of *ijtihad*. It seems that the Prophet also saw *ijtihad* as a creative impulse rather than engaging in the technicalities of legal reasoning—as the *usul al-fiqh* later developed in abundance. When the Prophet spoke of *ijtihad* or when he approved of its application, he seems to have done so in terms of *ijtihad* qua creative thinking.

One would readily admit that imposing restrictions on thinking, even if it were possible, by cultures and legal traditions could be exaggerated, in which case it would be prone to acquiring negative dimensions. One would not, on the other hand, advocate free thinking that is not limited by some kind of goal-orientation and values. Even the actual process of creative thinking, as earlier noted, is a skill that could be learned and refined by stages to direct it into productive avenues. The liberal tradition of the West tends to impose minimal restrictions on thinking whereas Islam tends to take a more guided approach to creative reasoning. Whereas both the Islamic and Western traditions recognize the authority of reason as a criterion of judgment, the liberal tradition has, unlike Islam, isolated spirituality and faith from the ambit of scientific rationality.

However, the methodology of *ijtihad* was also influenced in the course of time by a variety of factors, including the political climate, the change of caliphate (*khilafah*) to monarchy (*mulk*), Hellenistic thought in relationship to analogy (*qiyas*) and its syllogistic components, and the rift between the religious scholars and ruling authorities.[28]

Usul al-fiqh and its proposed methodology followed a difficult course and became embroiled in technicality that had adverse consequences for *ijti-*

had. What is needed now is to recapture the purity of this vital concept, to make *ijtihad* as our principal instrument for originality and healthy adjustment, but also to revise and reform some aspects of the theory of *ijtihad* itself that are no longer responsive to the prevailing conditions and challenges of our time.

I have elsewhere discussed the theory of *ijtihad* and its related issues and space here does not permit engagement in detail.[29] Yet I conclude this section by suggesting, however briefly, that the conventional theory of *ijtihad* needs to be revised and reformed in respect of the need:

1) to recognize the validity of collective and consultative *ijtihad* (*ijtihad jama'i*) side by side with that of *ijtihad* by individual scholars;

2) to allow experts in other fields such as science, economics, and medicine to carry out *ijtihad* in their respective fields if they are equipped with adequate knowledge of the source evidence of Islam. They may alternatively sit together with, or seek advice from, those learned in *Shariah*.

Ijtihad has in the past been often used as an instrument of diversity and disagreement rather than of unity and consensus. Although disagreement must admittedly be allowed in principle, yet there is a greater need today for unity and consensus. Scholars and learned bodies should not perhaps encourage excessive engagement in diversity of schools and sects but try to find ways that would help to close the gap between them and encourage unity on principles. This may require policy guidelines for different settings and countries, and, if so, that should be reflected in our approaches to *ijtihad*. Certain guidelines may also be provided by thinkers and leaders to stimulate consensus-oriented *ijtihad* within the ranks of the judiciary and legislative assemblies.

Ijtihad has in the past been conceived basically as a legal concept and methodology. Our understanding of the source evidence on *ijtihad* does not specify such a framework for *ijtihad*. Rather, we think of the original conception of *ijtihad* as a problem-solving formula for the problems encountered by individual Muslims and the Muslim community. This would confirm our view of the need to broaden the scope of *ijtihad* to other disciplines beyond the framework of *fiqh* and *usul al-fiqh*.

According to a legal maxim of Islamic jurisprudence, there should be no *ijtihad* in the presence of a clear text of the Quran and Hadith (*la ijtihad ma'al-nass*). This maxim should also be revised. This is because of the possibility that the text in question could now be seen in a different light and given a fresh interpretation in a different context. What we are saying is that the legal text may need to be understood first and that by itself may involve *ijtihad*. Hence *ijtihad* may not be precluded if it could advance a fresh understanding of the text in the first place.

The persistent decline of critical reason among Muslims is due partly to the notion that the exercise of personal judgment and *ijtihad* ceased with the epoch-making works of the legists and imams of the past. Added to this is the

prevailing mindset that a Muslim should follow one or the other of the established schools of thought and abandon his judgment in favor of interpretations of the earlier centuries whose originators could have no conception of the necessities of the twenty-first century Muslims. Until about 1500 CE, independent *ijtihad* allowed Muslims and Muslim societies to continually adapt in the face of changing societal conditions and new advances in knowledge.

Unfortunately, as Muslim civilization began to weaken about four centuries ago in the face of Western advances, Muslims began to adopt a more conservative stance in an attempt to preserve traditional values and institutions. As a result Muslim thinkers became inclined to view innovation and adaptation negatively. For all the rhetoric and symbolic form of the neo-radicals that tend to dominate the audience of Muslims, the spirit of Islam is often palpably missing from their endeavors, while more than ever *ijtihad* is needed where women, education, and politics are concerned.

ISLAM AND THE WEST

Scientific rationality essentially reduces intelligence to the level of neural chemistry where mental and behavioral phenomena are understood merely as manifestations of physical processes. It tends to deprive us of our noblest dimensions (faith, love, beauty), separates the soul from the body, and the sensory from the intelligible. In the realm of economics, we are merely a producer and consumer of goods and is moved solely by our individual self-interest. This too is opposed to the Islamic viewpoint which also sees in us morality and transcendent faith.

This physicalist analysis of intelligence is now increasingly being seen as conceptually inadequate. The real question is whether one may admit a human dimension which is autonomous and irreducible to a physical mass. In Moravia's phrase "can one posit something which exists and yet at the same time is non physical? Do the rejection of the soul and the achievements attained by bio and neurosciences oblige us to hold that man is nothing but body?"[30] Recently these have been attempted by some creative thinkers to reconceptualize intentions of 'reason' and 'intelligence' along anti-materialistic lines drawing on the experience of older non-Western traditions, or even popular folk conceptions.[31]

Islamic philosophy—which mainly studies purposes, as against science which mainly studies causes—sees, in line with the Quranic teaching, the role of objects and events as signs of divine presence and action. Faith is understood by Muslims not as a limitation on science but as its vista for enrichment and perfection.[32]

The variant perspectives of Western philosophy and science are also behind the Western puzzlement why Muslims have not become more secularized. This unwarranted assumption has in the past led to mistaken assessments of Islam and continues to foster genuine misunderstanding concerning the real

nature of Islamic religion and intellectual traditions. The misunderstanding is unfortunately not unique to Westerners. For the majority of Muslims today are also woefully uninformed of the depth and scope of their rich heritage on the authoritative validity of reason. Thinking Muslims should work to vindicate the symbiotic relation of faith and reason in their religion and see it as a source of enrichment and contribution of Islam to human understanding and civilization.

CONCLUSION

This essay advanced a Quranic perspective on thinking, which is affirmative in critical and goal-oriented thinking and also provides a set of guidelines that ensures its purity and purpose from negative reductionist influences. The guidelines so provided are also rich in advancing a spiritual dimension with the understanding that thinking which is not informed by morality and faith can lose its direction and purpose and can even become harmful to human welfare. From the Quranic vantage point, the sciences of nature should be key to our cognition of the signs of God in the universe. For this may be instrumental in solving individual and social problems without interrupting the cosmic order and the human habitat on earth. The blatant disregard of ethical values in science has weakened scientists' sense of responsibility and contributed to the degradation of the human condition on the globe.

Since thinking is a skill that can be advanced by self-application and training, it is amenable to guidance, bereavement, and enrichment. Universities and institutions of learning in Muslim countries are generally short of resources, and those who have the means still fall short, to their detriment, of nurturing the culture of reading and research among their students and scholars. Centers of higher learning may do well to establish a new order of relationship between the natural sciences and humanities, and between all fields of knowledge and human welfare and also the avenues of benefit to society. The present-day education system is due for a reappraisal in order to instill creative thinking and breadth of vision among students and scholars that is informed by the inter-relatedness of the various disciplines of learning. This could be done, as one observer suggested, "by adding sufficient number of courses in humanities to the science and engineering curricula, by cross-disciplinary interaction and collaboration."[33]

It is ironic to note, however, that the vast majority of Muslims are wont to rote reading of the Quran which is patently vacuous and devoid of thinking. The Quran is usually read, committed to memory, and cited for its spiritual merit rather than intellectual stimulation and enrichment. This is evidently not the advice one obtains from the Quran itself Al-Qaradawi has rightly observed about the current realities of public education in Muslim countries that "the system relies on memorization and cramming more than it does on comprehension and analysis. A typical weakness of this method is that the memorizer

forgets as soon as the exams are over. But if what is learned is founded in understanding and comprehension, its substance will remain in the mind and will not be prone to oblivion so quickly."[34]

But the issue that we raise here is well-entrenched and originates in the overall emphasis that most educationists and jurists of earlier times have placed on the study of the Quran, Hadith and *fiqh* manuals, often calling attention to words and sentences of the text at the expense of comprehension and analysis. The basic approach to Quran studies thus emphasized correct pronunciation and memorization. This repetitive system of learning was particularly pronounced in the context of child education, although it was not confined to this framework as other and more advanced levels of Islamic scholarship also bore the same influence.[35]

Notwithstanding the profound influence of the Quran on the thoughts, mores, and cultures of Muslim individuals and societies, thinking by its nature does not lend itself to any predetermined framework and guideline. It seems that the Quran also seeks only to provide signs and signposts on thinking, but the subjective and innately individual bent of thinking is often inspired by imagination and insight which cannot be encapsulated by definitions and guidelines. A creative mind is unique by its attributes, and thinking that originates in a learned and upright individual is one of the greatest gifts of creation that can itself fit the description of divine example, or sign, of God on earth.

It remains to be added though that imaginative thinking has also been sparkled by sources and influences among great Muslim thinkers of other cultures and traditions—just as we note also that the great thinkers of history emerged in all regions, cultures, and religions. The substance of these statements is upheld in a renowned Hadith in which the Prophet instructed the Muslims to "seek knowledge, even unto China," and in another Hadith that "wisdom is the lost property of the believer; he is entitled to it wherever he finds it."

Knowledge and wisdom must therefore be ultimately seen as the shared achievements of humanity, endowed and posited by its outstanding and creative thinkers. This is also known from the fact that the outcomes of creative thinking are often shared and experienced far beyond geographical locales and frontiers—more so perhaps in the age of globalization.

It is hoped that the great thinkers and leaders of humanity make it a part of their agenda and commitment to narrow down the distances and divides between the intellectual and cultural traditions of the world and aspire them to the veritable vision of a shared destiny and wider human fraternity in their deliberations.

Mohammad Hashim Kamali[36]

PREVIEW *BOOK YEAR 6*

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

The Lessons in *Book Year 1* through *Book Year 24*, including *Book Year 6* presented here, are numbered consecutively in order of the revelation of a Quranic Chapter. *Book Year 6* begins with Lesson 49 and Quranic Chapter 28 which is the 49th Chapter revealed, followed by Quranic Chapters 17, 10, 11, 12 and, finally, Chapter 15, the 54th Chapter revealed.. It is in this year that the second migration to Abyssinia occurs and the conversion of Umar al-Khattab which further strengthened the young community suffering under torture and oppression.

The chronological order of the chapters of the Quran that follow throughout the series is based on the list accepted by al-Azhar University in Cairo[1] and is considered to be the official order. It differs greatly from the chronological order developed by Western scholars over the centuries and is much more detailed.

Quranic signs or verses (*ayat*) of each section (*ruku*) in a particular Quranic chapter are given in each lesson followed by a commentary, an analysis of the signs that answer three questions: Who is God?, How are the signs directed towards Prophet Muhammad? and How are the signs directed towards the Community? Following these questions, there is a section called Example of How Critical Thinking works. A short paragraph describes the Eight Elements of Reason and then a paragraph titled Example of How Quranic Critical Thinking Works. The paragraph that comes after this is for the student to determine which of the statements are one of the Eight Elements of Reasoning. Each Lesson ends with a Student Self-assessment.

We do not have a great deal of detailed information about the life of the Prophet Muhammad during the Makkah period. The information that we have falls in the various lessons. Appendix 1 correlates the original Quranic chapters with their chronological order.

PRELUDE
THE SECOND MIGRATION TO ABYSSINIA

The second migration to Abyssinia was under the leadership of Jafar ibn Abi Talib. Again, some of the Muslims who migrate are former POWs/slaves while others are from various tribes who live in Makkah. They each leave Makkah in small groups so as not to bring attention to themselves.

Those who migrate from the Abd al-Dar Clan to Abyssinia:

Musab ibn Umayr
Abd Rum ibn Umayr ibn Hashim
Suwaybit ibn Sad
Khuzaymah ibn Jahm ibn Qays
Jahm ibn Qays
Umm Harmala bint Abd al-Aswad
Amr (son of Jahm ibn Qays and Umm Harmala)
Khuzayma (son of Jahm ibn Qays and Umm Harmala)
Firas ibn al-Nadr[1]

Those who migrate from the Abd al-Manaf, Nawfal ibn, Clan to Abyssinia.

Utbah ibn Ghazwan ibn Jabir ibn Wahb, an ally of theirs[2]

Those who migrate from the Abd al-Shams Clan to Abyssinia:

Uthman ibn Affan
Ruqayya, daughter of the Messenger, his wife
Abu Hudhayfah ibn Utbah
Sahla bint Suhayl ibn Amr one of the Amir ibn Luayy clan, his wife
Abu Musa al-Ashari (Abdullah ibn Qays) an ally of the family of Utbah.
Said ibn al-Aas
Fatima bind Safwan
Khalid
Umaya bint khalaf
Said (son of Fatima bint Safwan and Amr ibn Said, born in Abyssinia)
Ama (daughter of Faatima bint Safwan and Amr ibn Said, born in Abyssinia, later married Zubayr ibn al-Awwam and bore Amr and Khalid)[3]

The one who migrates from the Abd al-Qusayy Clan to Abyssinia.

Tulayb ibn Umary[4]

Those who migrate from the Adiyy Clan to Abyssinia:

Amir ibn Rabiah of Anz ibn Wail, an ally of the al-Khattab family,
Layla bint Abu Hathma ibn Hudhayfah, his wife
Kharijah ibn Hudhayfah ibn Ghanim
Mamar ibn Abd Allah
Urwa ibn Abd al-Uzza
Adiy ibn Nadla
Numan (son of Adiy ibn Nadla)
Amr ibn Rabia
Layla[5]

Those who migrate from the Amir ibn Luayy Clan to Abyssinia:

Abu Sabrah ibn Abi Ruhm ibn Abd al-Uzza ibn Abu Qays. Others say it was Abu Hatib ibn Amr ibn Abdu Shams of the same descent. It is said that he was the first to arrive in Abyssinia.
Umm Khulthum
Abd Alah ibn Makhrama ibn Abdul Uzza
Sad ibn Khaula an ally of theirs
Abd Allah ibn Suhayl
Salit ibn Amr
al-Sakran
Sauda bint Zamaa
Malik ibn Zamaa
Amra bint al-Sadi
Hatib ibn Amr
Saad ibn Khaula[6]

Those who migrate from the Asad Clan to Abyssinia:

Zubayr ibn al-Awwam
al-Aswad
Yazid ibn Zamaa
Amr ibn Umayya
Abd Allah ibn Jahsh
Ubayd Allah ibn Jahsh
Umm Habiba bint Abu Sufyan
Qays ibn Abd Allah
Baraka bint Yasar
Muayqib ibn Abu Tatima[7]

The one who migrate from the Hisham Clan to Abyssinia and his wife:

Jafar ibn Abi Talib
Asma bint Umays
Abd Allah (child born in Abyssinia)[8]

Those who migrate from the Fihr ibn Malik Clan to Abyssinia:

Suhayl ibn Bayda
Amr ibn Abu Sarh ibn Rabia Iyad ibn Zuhayr; but it is said that this is wrong and that Rabia was the son of Hilal ibn Malik ibn Dabba
Amr ibn al-Harith
Harith ibn Abdu Qays ibn Laqit
Abu Ubayda ibn al-Jarrah
Amr ibn Abu Sahr
Uthman ibn Abd al-Ghanm
Saad ibn Abd al-Qays
al-Harith ibn Abd al-Qays[9]

Those who migrate from the Jumah Clan to Abyssinia:

Uthman ibn Mazun
Said (son of Uthman ibn Mazun)
Qudama ibn Mazun
Abd Allah ibn Mazun
Hatib ibn Harith
Fatima bint al-Mujallil
Muhammad ibn Harith
al-Harith ibn Harith
Hattab
Fukayha bint Yasar
Sufyan ibn Mamar
Jabir ibn Mamar
Jundad ibn Mamar
Hasana
Shurahbil ibn Abd Allah
Uthman ibn Rabia
Khattab ibn al-Harith ibn Mamar
Muhammad ibn Hatib[10]

Those who migrate from the Makhzum ibn Yaqaza Clan to Abyssinia:

Abu Salama ibn Abd al-Asad
Hind bint Abi Umayya ibn al-Mughirah (Umm Salama), his wife

Zaynab (daughter of Umm Salama, born in Abyssinia)
Abdullah ibn Sufyan ibn Abdul Asad
Habbbar ibn Sufyan ibn Abdul Asad
Muattib ibn Auf of Khuzaa (Ayhama)
Shammas ibn Uthman ibn al-Sharid
Salama ibn Hisham
Ayyash ibn Abu Rabia[11]

Those who migrate from the Sahm ibn Amr Clan to Abyssinia:

Khunays ibn Hudhafa
Abd Allah ibn al-Harith
Hisham ibn al-Aas
Qays ibn Hudahafa
Abu Qays ibn al-Harith
Abd Allah ibn Hudhafa
Harith ibn al-Harith
Mamar ibn al-Harith
Bishr ibn al-Harith
Said ibn al-Harith
Said ibn Amr
al-Saib ibn al-Harith
Umayr ibn Riab
Mahmiya ibn al-Jaza[12]

Those who migrate from the Taym ibn Murra Clan to Abyssinia:

Amr ibn Uthman ibn Amr
al-Harith ibn Khalid
Rayta bint al-Harith
Musa (son of Rayta born in Abyssinia)
Aisha (daughter of Rayta, born in Abyssinia)
Zaynab (daughter of Rayta, born in Abyssinia)[13]

Those who migrate from the Umayya sub-clan of Abd Shams to Abyssinia:

Amr ibn Said ibn al-As
Muayqib ibn Abu Fatima
Qays ibn Abdullah[14]

Those who migrate from the Zuhrah ibn Kilab Clan to Abyssinia

Abd al-Rahman ibn Awf
Amir ibn Abu Waqqas
al-Muttalib ibn Azhar
Ramla bint Abu Auf
Abd Allah (son of Ramla born in Abyssinia)

Abd Allah ibn Masud
Utba ibn Masud
al-Miqdad ibn Arm[15]

Those who migrate from the the Khuzaah Tribe to Abyssinia:
Muattib ibn Auf of Khuzaa, who was called Ayhama
Umm Harmala bint Abdul Aswad of Khuzaah (wife of Jahm ibn Qays)

The one who migrates from the the Kinanah Tribe to Abyssinia:
Fatima bint Safwan ibn Umayya (Muhrith)[16]

THE LEADER OF THE SECOND MIGRATION, JAFAR IBN ABI TALIB, RELATES HOW HE DEFENDED THE QURANIC MESSAGE TO THE NEGUS AGAINST THE UNGRATEFUL QURAYSH

When we reached Abyssinia the Negus gave us a kind reception. We safely practiced our religion, and we worshipped God, and suffered no wrong in word or deed.[17]

When the Quraysh came to know of that, they decided to send two determined men to the Negus and to give him presents of the choicest wares of Makkah. Leatherwork was especially prized there, so they collected a great many.

When Abu Talib perceived their design he composed a poem for the Negus to move him to treat the Muslims kindly and protect them. The Quraysh sent Abd Allah and Amr with instructions to give each general his present before they spoke to the Negus about the refugees. Then they were to give their presents to the Negus and ask him to give the men up before he spoke to them. They carried out these instructions to the letter, and said to each of the generals: Some foolish fellows from our people have taken refuge in the king's country. They have forsaken our religion and not accepted yours, but have brought in an invented religion which neither we nor you know anything about. Our nobles have sent us to the king to get him to return them, so when we speak to the king about them advise him to surrender them to us and not to speak to them, for their own people have the keenest insight and know most about their faults.

This the generals agreed to do. They took their gifts to the Negus and when he had accepted them, they said to him what they had already said to the generals about the refugees. Now there was nothing which Abd Allah and Amr disliked more than that the Negus should hear what the Muslims had to say. The generals recommended the king give them up and return them to their own people.

The Negus was enraged and said: No, by God, I will not surren-

der them. No people who have sought my protection, settled in my country, and chosen me rather than others shall be betrayed, until I summon them and ask them about what these two men allege. If they are as they say, I will give them up to them and send them back to their own people; but if what they say is false, I will protect them and see that they receive proper hospitality while under my protection.

Then he summoned the Messenger's Companions, and when his messenger came, they gathered together, saying one to another: What will you say to the Negus when you come to him?

They said: We shall say what we know and what our Prophet commanded us, come what may. When they came into the royal presence they found that the king had summoned his bishops with their sacred books exposed around him. He asked them what was the religion for which they had forsaken their people, without entering into his religion or any other.

Jafar ibn Abu Talib, the brother of Ali ibn Abi Talib and son of Abu Talib, answered: O King, we were an uncivilized people, worshipping idols, eating corpses, committing abominations, breaking natural ties, treating guests badly, and our strong devoured our weak. Thus we were until God sent us a Messenger whose lineage, truth, trustworthiness, and clemency we know. He summoned us to acknowledge God's unity and to worship him and to renounce the stones and images which we and our fathers formerly worshipped. He commanded us to speak the truth, be faithful to our engagements, mindful of the ties of kinship and offer hospitality, and to refrain from crimes and bloodshed. He forbade us to commit abominations and to speak lies, and to devour the property of orphans, to vilify chaste women. He commanded us to worship God alone and not to associate anything with Him, and he gave us orders about prayer, almsgiving, and fasting (enumerating the commands of the Quranic message).

We accepted his truth and believed in him, and we followed him in what he had brought from God, and we worshipped God alone without associating anything with Him. We treated as forbidden what he forbade, and as lawful what he declared lawful. Thereupon our people attacked us, treated us harshly and seduced us from our faith to try to make us go back to the worship of idols instead of the worship of God, and to regard as lawful the evil deeds we once committed. So when they got the better of us, treated us unjustly and circumscribed our lives, and came between us and our religion, we came to your country, having chosen you above all others. Here we have been happy in your protection, and we hope that we shall not be treated unjustly while we are with you, O King.

The Negus asked if they had with them anything which had come from God. When Jafar said that he had, the Negus commanded him to read it to him, so he recited to him a passage from Chapter 19:16-19:36 which had been revealed the previous year.

And mention in the Book Mary when she withdrew from her people to an eastern place, and she took a veil apart from them; then We sent unto her Our Spirit that presented himself to her a man without fault. She said, 'I take refuge in the All-merciful from you! If you fear God...' He said, 'I am but a messenger come from your Lord, to give you a boy most pure.' She said, 'How shall I have a son whom no mortal has touched, neither have I been unchaste?' He said, 'Even so your Lord has said: "Easy is that for Me; and that We may appoint him a sign unto men and a mercy from Us; it is a thing decreed.

So she conceived him, and withdrew with him to a distant place. And the birth pangs surprised her by the trunk of the palm-tree. She said: Would I had died before this, and become a thing forgotten!

*But the one that was below her called to her: Nay, do not sorrow; see, your Lord has set below you a rivulet. Shake also to you the palm-trunk, and there shall come tum*bling *upon her dates fresh and ripe. Eat therefore, and drink, and be comforted; and if you should see any mortal, say: I have vowed to the All-merciful a fast, and today I will not speak to any man." Then she brought the child to her folk carrying him; and they said, Mary, you have surely committed a monstrous thing! Sister of Aaron, your father was not a wicked man, nor was your mother a woman unchaste. Mary pointed to the child then; but they said, How shall we speak to one who is still in the cradle, a little child?*

He said: Lo, I am God's servant; God has given me the Book, and made me a Prophet. Blessed He has made me, wherever I may be; and He has enjoined me to pray, and to give the alms, so long as I live, and likewise to cherish my mother; He has not made me arrogant, unprosperous. Peace be upon me, the day I was born, and the day I die, and the day I am raised up alive!

That is Jesus, son of Mary, in word of truth, concerning which they are doubting. It is not for God to take a son unto Him. Glory be to Him! When He declares a thing, He but says to it: Be, and it is. Surely God is my Lord, and your Lord; so serve you Him. This is a straight path. (19:16-36)

The Negus and the bishops wept when they heard what Jafar recited to them. Then the Negus said: Of a truth, this and what Jesus brought have come from the same niche. You two may go, for by God, I will never give them up to them and they shall not be betrayed.

The Negus took a stick from the ground and said, By God, Jesus,

son of Mary, does not exceed what you have said by the length of this stick.

His generals round about him snorted when he said this, and he said: Though you snort, by God! Go, for you are safe in my country. Then he repeated three times the words: He who curses you will be fined. Not for a mountain of gold would I allow a man of you to be hurt. Give them back their presents, for I have no use for them. God took no bribe from me when He gave me back my kingdom, that I should take a bribe for it, and God did not do what men wanted against me, so why should I do what they want against Him.

So they left his presence, crestfallen, taking away their rejected gifts, while we lived with him comfortably in the best security.

THE ABYSSINIANS REVOLT AGAINST THE NEGUS

Jafar ibn Abi Talib wrote: While we were living thus, a rebel arose to snatch his kingdom from Negus and I never knew us to be so sad as we were at that, in our anxiety lest this fellow would get the better of the Negus, and that a man would arise who did not know our case as the Negus did. He went out against him, and the Nile lay between the two parties.

Jafar ibn Muhammad told me on the authority of his father that the Abyssinians assembled and said to the Negus: You have left our religion. They revolted against him. So he sent to Jafar and his companions and prepared ships for them, saying: Embark in these and be ready. If I am defeated, go where you please; if I am victorious, then stay where you are.

The Messenger's Companions called for a man who would go to the battle and bring back news, and Zubayr ibn al-Awwam volunteered. Now he was the youngest man we had. We inflated a waterskin and he put it under his chest, and swam across until he reached that point of the Nile where the armies faced one another. Then he went on until he met them.

Meanwhile we prayed to God to give the Negus victory over his enemy and to establish him in his own country; and as we were doing so, waiting for what might happen, up came al-Zubayr running, waving his clothes as he said: Hurrah, the Negus has conquered and God has destroyed his enemies and established him in his land.

By God, I never knew us to be so happy before. The Negus came back, God having destroyed his enemy and established him in his country, and the chiefs of the Abyssinians rallied to him. Meanwhile we lived in happiest conditions until we came to the Messenger of God in Makkah in 7 AH.

News of this reached the Prophet, and when the Negus died he prayed over him and begged that his sins might be forgiven.[18]

LESSON 49(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY MAKING INTERPRETATIONS, INFERENCES, CONCLUSIONS

Observation and information are the basis for sound conclusions. You learn to distinguish between what you observe from the Quranic signs and what you conclude. You delve into the facts given in the signs to find the implications as well as the concepts. You separate guessing from clear conclusions. You normally have a tendency to make inferences that reinforce your own egocentric or sociocentric world views. You learn to evaluate inferences that are made when your own desires are involved from inferences that develop sound conclusions. You should know that every interpretation that is made is based on inference and that you interpret every situation in which you find yourselves.

The Middle Community, Moderation (*ummatan wasatan*, *wasatiyyah*). The Islamic conception of the Middle Community visualizes a certain degree of parity between dialogic and co-related concepts such as reason and revelation, matter and spirit, rights and duties, individualism and society, compulsion and voluntarism, text and ijtihad, ideal and reality, continuity and change, and between the past realities and future prospects. How does wasatiyyah manifest itself and achieve its desire purposes of equilibrium and moderation?[19]

QURANIC CHAPTER 28: THE STORY (AL-QASAS) SIGNS 28:1-28:13

Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:1)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:2)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:3)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:4)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:5)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:6)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:7)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:8)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:9)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:10)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:11)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:12)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:13)

QURANIC CHAPTER 28: THE STORY (AL-QASAS) SIGNS 28:14-28:21

Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:14)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:15)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:16)

Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:17)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:18)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:19)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:20)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:21)

Quranic Chapter 28: The Story (al-Qasas) Signs 28:22-28:28

Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:22)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:23)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:24)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:25)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:26)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:27)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:28)

Quranic Chapter 28: The Story (al-Qasas) Signs 28:29-28:42

Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:29)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:30)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:31)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:32)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:33)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:34)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:35)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:36)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:37)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:38)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:39)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:40)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:41)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:42)

Quranic Chapter 28: The Story (al-Qasas) Signs 28:43-28:50

Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:43)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:44)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:45)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:46)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:47)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:48)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:49)

Makkah: Book 27: Moses (28:50)

QURANIC CHAPTER 28: THE STORY (AL-QASAS)
SIGNS 28:51-28:60

Makkah: *And, certainly, We caused the saying to reach them so that perhaps they will recollect.* (28:51)

Madinah (28:52)

Madinah (28:53)

Madinah (28:54)

Madinah (28:55)

Makkah: *Truly, **you** have not guided whom **you** have loved but God guides whomever He wills.*
And He is greater in knowledge of the ones who are truly guided. (28:56)
*They said: If we follow the guidance with **you**, we would be snatched away from our region.*
Establish We not firmly for them a holy, safe place where all kinds of fruits are collected as provision from that which proceeds from Our Presence?
But most of them know not. (28:57)
And how many a town that We caused to perish boasted about its livelihood.
And these are their dwellings, not to be inhabited after them but a little.
And, truly, We, We had been the ones who inherit. (28:58)
***Your** Lord had not been One Who Causes towns to perish until He raises up to their mother-town a Messenger who recounts Our signs to them.*
We never had been Ones Who Cause towns to perish unless their people are ones who are unjust. (28:59)
And whatever things you were given are enjoyment for this present life and its adornment.
And what is with God is better for one who endures.
Will you not, then, be reasonable? (28:60)

COMMENTARY°

Chapter 28, the 49th Chapter revealed, was revealed in Makkah, at a time when the Muslims were a small minority without power, while the idolaters were in full control of power, wealth, position and authority. In this context, the chapter establishes the true standard of values and power: It clearly states that there is only one true power in the universe, God's, and only one true value, faith. Whoever en-

joys God's support need have no fear, even though he may be bereft of material power, and whomever God opposes can enjoy neither peace nor security even though he may be in possession of all types of material power. A person who enshrines the value of faith enjoys every good thing, while the one who lacks it will not reap any benefit whatsoever.

The Prophet did not need to do more than recite a portion of the Quran in his effort to present his faith to followers of earlier revelations and they accepted it. Yet with regard to his own people, the Prophet made every endeavor to help them see the light of faith, yet God did not open their hearts to it because of what He knew of them. The Prophet could not give guidance to everyone he wished. It is certainly God who guides those whom He knows to have the right attitude and mentality making them ready to accept the faith: *Truly, you have not guided whom you have loved but God guides whomever He wills. And He is greater in knowledge of the ones who are truly guided.* (28:56)

It takes the ungrateful on a further round showing them the true causes of ruin, not least ingratitude for God's blessings, denying His messengers, and turning a blind eye to His signs. This is followed by further signs that clearly outline true values. Thus, this present life, with all its pleasures, appear infinitesimal when compared to what God has in store for those who truly believe. (28:57-28:60)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 28:51-28:60

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quranic message tells Prophet Muhammad: You, Muhammad, have not guided whom you loved, but God guides. The ungrateful had said to him: If we follow the guidance with you, Muhammad, we will be forced to leave our land. God confirms to Prophet Muhammad that they had been established firmly in a holy, safe place.

Your Lord, Muhammad, has not been one who causes towns to perish until He raises up to their mother-town a Messenger who recounts the signs to him and unless their people are ones who are unjust.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

Most of the ungrateful do not realize that the land in which they have been established is a holy, safe place for them to earn a livelihood. It asks the ungrateful: Will you not be reasonable?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based

on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message states that guidance from God has been continuous. How is guidance from God continuous? God has sent previous Messengers with His revelations. Those who know the previous revelations readily believe that it is possible for a Messenger to receive revelation from God. God has continually sent Messengers who teach His guidance. The following of the guidance results in those who exhibit noble qualities. Those who exhibit noble qualities are those who follow guidance from God.

Here is an example:

Point of view: The Quranic message states: **Purpose:** that guidance from God has been continuous. **Question:** How is guidance from God continuous? **Fact:** God has sent previous Messengers with His revelations. **Interpretation:** Those who know the previous revelations readily believe that it is possible for a Messenger to receive revelation from God. **Concept:** God has continually sent Messengers who teach His guidance. **Implication:** The following of the guidance results in those who exhibit noble qualities. **Assumption:** Those who exhibit noble qualities are those who follow guidance from God.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to understand what Islamic Moderation is.

I was able to think of ways to implement Islamic Moderation in my life.

LESSON 49(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ARGUMENTS AND INTERPRETATIONS

WHAT IS AN ARGUMENT?

Arguments differ from explanations. An explanation is also a series of statements, but the difference is that with an explanation, knowing the first statement is true. The statements that follow explain why the first statement is true. On the other hand, in the case of arguments, based on the series of statements or premises, you infer the conclusion.

Critical thinkers try to overlook their preconceptions when agreeing or disagreeing with a conclusion. They use tools of analysis to try to understand the reason behind the issue and to determine its relative strengths and weaknesses. One of the tools of analysis is to continue to ask for reasons and to consider other points of views. They pay special attention to possible strong arguments with which they disagree because they are aware of the tendency to ignore, oversimplify, distort or otherwise unfairly dismiss them. They analyze questions and place conflicting arguments and interpretations in opposition to one another as a means of highlighting key concepts, assumptions, implications, and so forth. When giving or being given an interpretation, students learn to recognize the difference between evidence and interpretation, explore the assumptions on which interpretations are based and propose and evaluate alternative interpretations for their relative strength. As autonomous thinkers, they consider competing theories and develop their own theories.

QURANIC CHAPTER 28: THE STORY (AL-QASAS) SIGNS 28:61-28:75

Makkah: *Is he to whom We promised*
a fairer promise
—and it is one that reaches fulfillment—
like him to whom We gave the enjoyment
of enjoyment for this present life?
Again, on the Day of Resurrection he will be
among the ones who are charged? (28:61)
And on that Day He will proclaim to them and will say:
Where are My ascribed associates
whom you had been claiming? (28:62)
They would say about whom will be realized the saying:
Our Lord! These are they whom we led into error.
We led them into error even as we erred.
We clear ourselves with ***You****.*
They had never been worshipping us. (28:63)

And it would be said: Call to your ascribed associates.
Then, they will call to them, but they will not respond to them
and they will see the punishment.
If only they had been truly guided! (28:64)
And on a Day when He would proclaim to them
and He would say:
What have you answered to the ones who are sent? (28:65)
Then, the tidings of that day will be in darkness
and they will not demand anything of one another. (28:66)
As for him who repented and believed
and did as one in accord with morality,
then, perhaps he will be among the ones who prosper. (28:67)
And ***your*** *Lord creates whatever He wills and chooses.*
Not for them had there been a choice.
Glory be to God and exalted is He
above partners they ascribe! (28:68)
And ***your*** *Lord knows what their breasts hide*
and what they speak openly. (28:69)
And He, God, there is no god but He.
His is all Praise in the First and in the Last.
And His is the determination.
And to Him you will be returned. (28:70)
Say: Considered you
what if God made the nighttime endless for you
until the Day of Resurrection?
What god other than God brings you illumination?
Will you not, then, hear? (28:71)
Say: Considered you
what if God made the daytime endless for you
until the Day of Resurrection?
What god other than God
brings you nighttime wherein you rest?
Will you not, then, perceive? (28:72)
And it is out of His mercy that He assigned for you
the nighttime and the daytime that you rest in it
and that you be looking for His grace
and so that perhaps you will give thanks. (28:73)
And on a Day He will proclaim to them and say:
Where are My ascribed associates
whom you had been claiming? (28:74)
And We will tear out a witness from every community
and We will say: Prepare your proof.
Then, they will know that The Truth is with God

and will go astray from them what they had been devising. (28:75)

COMMENTARY°

The chapter now takes us on another round in which it portrays certain images of the Day of Judgment. It shows us the inevitable end to which associating partners with God leads. (28:61-67)

The first question is one of rebuke: *And on that Day He will proclaim to them and will say: Where are My ascribed associates whom you had been claiming?* (28:62) God certainly knows that such alleged partners are not to be found on that day, and that those who made the claims about their alleged status know nothing about them, they cannot even reach them. The question is asked so as to disgrace them. Therefore, those who are asked will give no answer, because no answer is needed or expected. They only try to exonerate themselves for having led others astray, preventing them from following divine guidance, as the elders of the Quraysh used to do with their subordinates. *They would say about whom will be realized the saying: Our Lord! These are they whom we led into error. We led them into error even as we erred. We clear ourselves with **You**. They had never been worshipping us.* (28:63)

This attempt at diverting the questions will not, however, benefit them. They are forced back to the central point, which is the farce of associating partners with God: *Then, they will call to them.* (28:64) If those alleged partners can do any good, now is the time to call on them. Therefore, they are urged to appeal to them to come to their help. In their misery, they know all too well that calling on them is futile. But they have no choice but to do as they are told: *But they will not respond to them.* (28: 64) Nothing else was expected and so the ungrateful are humiliated: *And they will see the punishment.* (28:64) They see it in this dialogue, just as they see it before them. Their inevitable end is one of great suffering.

When the image we see is at its climax, they are shown the guidance they continued to reject. This is the dear wish of anyone in that position on that great day. Guidance is available to them in this life if they will only take it up: *If only they had been truly guided!* (28:64)

They are immediately returned to that dreaded scene: *And on a Day when He would proclaim to them and He would say: What have you answered to the ones who are sent?* (28:65) God certainly knows how they answered His messengers, but the question is put to them as a form of rebuke. In their state of total loss, they have no answer to give: *Then, the tidings of that day will be in darkness and they will not demand anything of one another.* (28:66) For "*darkness*" the Ara-

bic text uses the word *amiyat*, which denotes blindness. Indeed, it imparts an air of non-seeing to the whole scene. It is as if all information has been blinded and cannot reach them, leaving them with nothing. They can neither ask nor answer any questions. They remain silent, totally lost.

This is the opposite image. *As for him who repented and believed and did as one in accord with morality, then, perhaps he will be among the ones who prosper.* (28:67) At the moment the ungrateful are at the height of their distress, the chapter depicts the person who repents of his sins, believes in God and does God-conscious deeds. This is the person who hopes to be successful. The choice is open to all and the time is there to make such a choice.

The chapter makes it clear that everything is subject to God's will and His choice: *And **your** Lord creates whatever He wills and chooses. Not for them had there been a choice. Glory be to God and exalted is He above partners they ascribe!And **your** Lord knows what their breasts hide and what they speak openly. And He, God, there is no god but He. His is all Praise in the First and in the Last. And His is the determination. And to Him you will be returned.* (28:68-28:70)

The chapter then takes the ungrateful on yet another round presenting them with scenes of the universe. In these, they are shown to remain oblivious to what God chooses for them and their life. It alerts them to two great universal signs, the night and the day, and the secrets they involve of what God chooses for His servants. (28:71-28:73)

People miss the light of day when the winter nights become a little longer, and cannot wait for the bright sun when it disappears for a few hours behind clouds. *Say: Considered you what if God made the nighttime endless for you until the Day of Resurrection? What god other than God brings you illumination? Will you not, then, hear?* (28:71) What will they do then if they lose its light completely, with the night stretching perpetually over their world? This question supposes that they will remain alive in such an eventuality, when all life is in peril unless daylight is forthcoming.

People look for the shade when the hours of day stretch and become very hot, and they look forward to the coming of the night when the days stretch longer in the summer. *Say: Considered you what if God made the daytime endless for you until the Day of Resurrection? What god other than God brings you nighttime wherein you rest? Will you not, then, perceive?* (28:72) They enjoy their repose and rest in the night. All creatures need the night when they can renew the energy they spend during the day. What would happen to them then, should they remain alive, if the day were endlessly per-

petuated until the Day of Judgment? Indeed, all life could perish in a day that never ends.

Everything in this universe is determined according to a careful measure, and every little detail is planned. *And it is out of His mercy that He assigned for you the nighttime and the daytime that you rest in it and that you be looking for His grace and so that perhaps you will give thanks.* (28:73)

Then follows a quick image of the Day of Judgment presented in a rhetorical question about those beings the ungrateful alleged to be partners with God. The chapter, thus, confronts them with their false claims, showing them to be absolutely without substance: *And on a Day He will proclaim to them and say: Where are My ascribed associates whom you had been claiming? And We will tear out a witness from every community and We will say: Prepare your proof. Then, they will know that The Truth is with God and will go astray from them what they had been devising.* (28:74-28:75)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 28:61-28:75

WHO IS GOD?

God will tear out a witness from every community.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quranic message tells the Prophet to say: Considered you (the ungrateful) what if God made the nighttime endless for you until the Day of Resurrection? What god other than God brings you illumination? Will you not hear? Considered you (the ungrateful) what if God made the daytime endless for you until the Day of Resurrection? What god other than God brings you nighttime wherein you rest? Will you not perceive?

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The Quranic message asks the ungrateful: Is he to whom We promised a fairer promise—and it will be fulfilled—like he to whom We gave enjoyment in this present life? On the Day of Resurrection will he be among the ones who are charged? Where are My ascribed associates whom you had been claiming? Call to your ascribed associates. When they call to them, they will not respond. Then the ungrateful will see the punishment. What have you answered to the ones who are sent?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for **a purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experi-

ences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
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5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message teaches that on the Day of Judgment the believers in false and imaginary deities will be asked to call those whom they worshipped as gods other than the One God. Where are the partners you associated with God? The idolaters worshiped multiple gods instead of the One God. On the Day of Judgment, those who ascribed partners to God will be asked where their ascribed partners are. Those who ascribe partners with God will call to these partners deny that God is One. That which we name and worship as partners with God will not be able to answer us when we call them on the Day of Judgment because they are just names that we have created. Partners we ascribe with God cannot answer when we call them.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to use specific analytic techniques, such as making assumptions explicit and evaluating them.
I was able to clarify issues, conclusions, values, and words.
I was able to develop criteria for evaluation.

Lesson 49(3). Critical Thinking Strategy
Making Plausible Inferences or Interpretations

The Middle Community
Islamic Moderation:[20]

Has helped advocate a balanced vision of Islam that is inclusive of the interests both of the individual and society, keeping in sight also its spiritual, rational, and scientific dimensions, just as it seeks to strike a middle ground between traditional and modernist understandings of Islam, not only for the present generation but also for those that follow.

Tends to bind the various dimensions of Islam together under the Quranic principle of *tawhid*, not only as a religion but also a legal system with its own economic and political characteristics.

Strikes a balance between the concerns of continuity and change by safeguarding that which is permanent and unchangeable as opposed to that which is liable to change, keeping the balance. The unchangeable parts of Islam include the pillars of the faith such as devotional duties, and decisive injunctions upheld by universal consensus of the ummah throughout the ages. This can also be said of the basic principles of law and morality that are numerous, including human dignity, justice, accountability and the rule of law, honesty, trustworthiness, purity and cleanliness, honoring one's parents, fulfillment of promises, sincerity, patience and courage, as well as avoidance of criminality and aggression, theft, murder, lying, and so forth.

The changeable parts of Islam include the rulings of general custom (*urf*), personal reasoning and opinion (*ijtihad* and *fatwa*), especially those that lack a firm textual foundation: rules derived through analogy, juristic preference, and considerations of public interest, which are usually founded in an effective cause and rationale that may well become liable to change with the change of their underlying effective causes.

The unchangeable principles of Islam set in place a structure of values that gives the Muslim community (*ummah*) its distinctive identity, and those that are changeable are important for keeping pace with the unfolding changes of custom, science, and civilization.

Quranic Chapter 28: The Story (al-Qasas)
Signs 28:76-28:82

Makkah: Book 27: Moses, Korah (28:76)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses, Korah (28:77)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses, Korah (28:78)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses, Korah (28:79)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses, Korah (28:80)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses, Korah (28:81)

Makkah: Book 27: Moses, Korah (28:82)

QURANIC CHAPTER 28: THE STORY (AL-QASAS)
SIGNS 28:83-28:88

Makkah: *This is the Last Abode*
that We will assign to those
who want not self-exaltation in the earth, nor corruption.
And the Ultimate End is for
the ones who are God-conscious. (28:83)
Whoever brought about benevolence,
for him there will be better than it.
And whoever brought about an evil deed,
then, not will be given recompense to those who did evil deeds
other than for what they had been doing. (28:84)
Jufha on the Migration: *Truly He Who imposed the Quran for*
you will be one who restores you to the place of return. Say: My
Lord is greater in knowledge of whoever drew near guidance and
whoever is clearly wandering astray. (28:85)
And ***you*** *had been without hope that the Book*
would be cast down to ***you****,*
but as a mercy from ***your*** *Lord.*
Be ***you*** *not a sustainer of the ones who are ungrateful.* (28:86)
And let them not bar ***you*** *from the signs of God*
after they were caused to descend to ***you****.*
And call to ***your*** *Lord.*
And be ***you*** *not among the ones who are polytheists.* (28:87)
And call not to any god other than God.
There is no god but He!
Everything is that which perishes, but His Countenance.
To Him is the determination
and to Him you will be returned. (28:88)

COMMENTARY°

Now it addresses the Prophet and the small band of believers who followed him when he was still in Makkah. (28:86)

His Lord bids him then not to lend support to the ungrateful. He warns him of allowing the ungrateful or anyone else to turn him away from God's revelations. He sets the pure faith based on God's absolute Oneness against idolatry and idolaters.

There can never be any mutual support or cooperation between believers and the ungrateful when their two ways and codes are so widely different. One group is God's party and the other Satan's

party. On what could they cooperate? (28:87)

The ungrateful always try to turn the advocates of faith away from their task, using all means and methods. The believers, however, always stick to their way, paying no heed to those who oppose them or try to divert them. They have God's revelations with which they have been entrusted.

It should always be a direct, clear call that allows for no ambiguity or equivocation. It is a call to God, not to any bond based on national or narrow interests. It does not seek the fulfilment of any desire. Whoever wishes to adopt this message pure and simple should do so. Those who want something else should know that the way to that end is different. (28:87-28:88)

This rule is stated twice in succession. The first warns against associating partners with God. The second warns against adopting any deity alongside God. It is this rule that separates clarity from confusion with regard to faith. It is on this rule that the whole structure of faith is based: Its morality, values, duties and legislations. It is the pivot around which every directive and legislative order turns. Therefore, it is always stated first.

Such emphasis is then repeated in a rather different way. (28:88)

There is no deity other than Him. No submission is made to anyone else. His is the only power and the only refuge. Indeed everything else will die and perish: Wealth, position, authority, power, life and its comforts, the whole earth, the heavens and all creatures in them, as well as the entire universe we know or do not know about. All will perish and only God, the Everlasting, will remain. *To Him is the determination.* (28:88) He judges as He pleases. No one is party to His judgment, and none can impede or abrogate His verdict. Whatever He wills shall be. *And to Him you will be returned.* (28:88) There can be no escape from Him or His judgment.

Thus concludes the chapter that shows God's will taking direct action, protecting the divine message and destroying tyranny. It concludes with restating the basic concept of faith: God's Oneness and His transcendent authority. Therefore, the advocates of the divine message should go along their way confident and reassured.

LESSON 49(3). SUMMARY OF SIGNS 28:83-28:88

WHO IS GOD?

God will assign the Last Abode for those who do not self-exalt on the earth nor cause corruption. There is no god but He. Everything perishes or dies except His Presence. To Him everyone will be returned.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quranic message says to Prophet Muhammad: Were you, Muhammad, hoping that the Quran would be sent down to you as a mercy from your Lord, Muhammad? Do not sustain or assist the ungrateful. Do not let them bar you from the signs of God when they are revealed to you. Call to your Lord, Muhammad. Do not be among the idol worshipers. Call not upon any god, but God.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

According to the Quranic message here, the best place of rest in the hereafter is for the pious. Who are the pious? The pious are those who not exalt themselves in the earth nor cause corruption. Whoever does acts of kindness, there will be better for him or her than that. To be pious means to not be arrogant nor to corrupt the earth and to do acts of kindness to others. The pious are the ones who will receive the best reward in the eternal life to come. There will be an afterlife in the hereafter.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to understand what Islamic Moderation is.
I was able to think of ways to implement Islamic Moderation in my life.

50(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
RECOGNIZING CONTRADICTIONS

We have seen the Quranic sign that claims one of the proofs of its divine origin is the question of contradictions. A human created document would contain many contradictions while the Quran does not. The Quranic style is one of harmony and consistency.

Whereas there are no contradictions in the Quran and its signs, there are man-made contradictions that arise from the interpretation of some of the verses, in particular, 4:34 as we move forward to Problem to Solve.

Consistency is a fundamental—some would say the defining—ideal of critical thinkers. They strive to remove contradictions from their beliefs, and are wary of contradictions in others. As would-be fair-minded thinkers they strive to judge like cases in a like manner. Perhaps the most difficult form of consistency to achieve is that between word and deed. Self-serving double standards are one of the most common problems in human life. Children are in some sense aware of the importance of consistency when they ask their parents: Why don't I get to do what they get to do? They are frustrated by double standards, yet are given little help in getting insight into them and dealing with them. Critical thinkers can pinpoint specifically where opposing arguments or views contradict each other, distinguishing the contradictions from compatible beliefs, thus focussing their analyses of conflicting views.

QURANIC CHAPTER 17: THE JOURNEY BY NIGHT (AL-ISRA)
SIGNS 17:1-17:10

The Night Journey: *Glory be to Him Who caused His servant to set forth by night from the Masjid al-Haram to the Masjid al-Aqsa around which We blessed so that We cause him to see Our signs.* **(17:1)**[21]

Makkah: Book 27: Moses (17:2)

Makkah: Book 25: Noah (17:3)

Makkah: Book 27: Children of Jacob (17:4)

Makkah: Book 27: Children of Jacob (17:5)

Makkah: Book 27: Children of Jacob (17:6)

Makkah: Book 27: Children of Jacob (17:7)

Makkah: Book 27: Children of Jacob (17:8)

Makkah: *Truly, this, the Quran, guides to what is upright and gives good tidings to the ones who believe, those who are as the ones in accord with morality, that they will have a great compensation.* (17:9)

And as for those who believe not in the world to come,

We made ready for them a painful punishment. (17:10)

COMMENTARY°

The section now speaks about the Quran, making it clear that it is a book of true and full guidance: Surely this Quran shows the way to that which is most upright. It gives the believers who do good deeds the happy news that theirs will be a rich reward. It declares that We have prepared a grievous suffering for those who do not believe in the life to come. (17:9-17:10)

Truly, this, the Quran, guides to what is upright (17:9) is a general statement applicable to all those who are guided by the Quran and the goals to which it guides. Thus, the guidance is given to communities and generations that are not restricted by time or place. And the superiority of its guidance applies to all that they may attain when they follow any method or approach. It is also superior to every good thing to which people may be guided at any time or place.

The Quran also ensures harmony between our outward and inward existence, feelings and behavior, faith and action. In all this it shows the way to what is 'most upright', linking all these aspects to the true and unseverable bond that exists between us and God. This enables us to look up to a higher horizon while we are still on earth. Thus what we do in our daily life becomes an act of worship, provided that we do so seeking God's acceptance. This is true even when the action itself provides us with pure enjoyment of what is available in this life.

The Quran also endorses all divine religions, establishing a firm link between them, honoring all that is sacred in them, and protecting all that they hold in reverence. This ensures that humanity, with all its divine faiths live in peace. In this again the Quran provides its perfect guidance. This is all summed up in the sign which says: (17:10) This is the basic rule laid down by the Quran in respect of action and reward. The Quranic structure is built on the two pillars of faith and good action. Faith that is not confirmed by action is hollow, unfulfilled, while action that is not based on faith lacks firm roots. It is when both are combined that life maintains its most upright course, and with them both together guidance shown in the Quran takes its proper effect.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 17:1-17:10

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The Quran guides human beings to what is upright. It gives good tidings to ones who believe, who are in accord with morality while those who deny

the signs will have a painful punishment.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quran guides to what is what is honest, honorable, worthy, moral, conscientious, good, virtuous. What does the Quran give to those who are guided? Good tidings to the ones who believe and who act in accord with morality. It is those who believe and who are moral people who will have a great compensation. Following God's guidance is to act morally. Acting in accord with morality results in a great compensation from God. Human beings have been created with a moral compass.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to explore possible ways to reconcile apparent contradictions.
Could someone hold contradictory point of views?
How might someone argue that someone can believe both?

Lesson 50(2). Critical Thinking Strategy
Noting Significant Similarities and Differences

Quranic critical thinkers try to treat things that are similar in a similar way and things that are different in a different way. Uncritical thinkers tend not to see the significant similarities and differences. It often is the case that things that appear to be superficially similar are often significantly different and things that appear to be superficially different are often essentially the same. It takes practice to be able to distinguish between the two. As this sensitivity develops, it influences how students experience, how they describe, how they categorize, and how they reason about things. They become more careful and discriminating in their use of words and phrases.

Quranic Chapter 17: The Journey by Night (al-Isra)
Signs 17:11-17:22

Makkah: *And the human being calls to worse*
as much as he supplicates for good.
And the human being had been hasty. (17:11)
We made the nighttime and the daytime as two signs.
Then, We blotted out the sign of nighttime
and We made the sign of daytime
for one who perceives
that you be looking for grace from your Lord
and that you know the number of years
and the reckoning.
And We explained everything distinctly,
with a decisive explanation. (17:12)
For every human being
We fastened his omen to his neck
and We will bring out for him
on the Day of Resurrection
a book in which he will meet
that which unfolded. (17:13)
*Recite **your** book!*
*This day **your** soul sufficed **you***
*as **your** reckoner against **you**.* (17:14)
Whoever was truly guided is truly guided only for his own soul.
And whoever went astray, then, only goes astray against it.
And no burdened soul bears
the heavy load of another,
nor would We have been ones who punish
until We raised up a Messenger. (17:15)

And when We wanted to cause a town to perish,
We commanded ones who are given ease,
but they disobeyed therein.
So the saying was realized against it.
Then, We destroyed it with utter destruction. (17:16)

Makkah: Book 25: Noah (17:17)

Makkah: *Whoever had been wanting that which hastens away,*
We quicken it for him, whatever We will
to whomever We want.
Again, We assigned hell for him.
He will roast in it, one who is condemned,
one who is rejected. (17:18)
And whoever wanted the world to come
and endeavored for it, endeavoring, while he is one who believes,
then, those, their endeavoring had been appreciated. (17:19)
To each We furnish relief, these and these,
*with the gift of **your** Lord.*
*And this gift of **your** Lord*
has not been that which is confined. (17:20)
Look on how We gave advantage to some of them
over some others.
And, certainly, the world to come will be greater in degrees
and greater in excellence. (17:21)
Assign not another god with God for,
*then, **you** will be put as one who is condemned,*
one who is damned. (17:22)

COMMENTARY°

OUR HASTY CHARACTERISTIC

Those who do not follow the guidance of the Quran are left to their own devices. But we are hasty, unaware of what benefits him and what causes him harm, impulsive, unable to control his reactions even when they bring about evil consequences: *And the human being calls to worse as much as he supplicates for good. And the human being had been hasty.* (17:11) He does not know the ultimate results. He may do something that is evil and precipitate its results unaware that these only bring about immense harm to himself; or he may be aware of such results but is unable to control himself. This is a long, long way away from the assured, calm and consistent guidance given in the Quran. The two ways of Quranic guidance and human desire are too widely divergent.

The chapter here mentions some of God's universal signs and

relates these to people's actions, efforts and earnings on the one hand and their fruits and reward on the other. We thus see that the laws that govern action and reward are closely linked to the laws governing the whole universe. Both are based on perfect rules that never fail. They are as accurate as the system that ensures that day and night succeed each other. They are operated by the Creator who has made them two of His signs: (17:12) Nothing takes place haphazardly. (17:12)

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

The law of action and reward is directly linked to the meticulous law of the universe: (17:13-17:14)

The Arabic phraseology of this sign provides a highly graphic description which uses the word, 'bird', in place of 'action'. Thus we have here a metaphor referring to what flies of a person's actions and becomes tied around his neck, so that it never parts from him. Thus does the Quran in graphically describing things in order to emphasize its point. A person's actions do not leave him, and he cannot disown them. The same applies to the wide open record of all his actions. Thus whatever he has done in life is laid bare. He cannot hide, ignore or disown it. Both descriptions, of the bird denoting action and the record thrown open, produce a very strong effect that adds to the fears experienced on that very difficult day when nothing remains hidden. Everyone is told to read their own records because, ***This day your soul sufficed you as your reckoner against you.*** (17:14)

Again the same accurate universal law is linked to the rules governing action and reward: (17:15)

It is all individual responsibility. When one follows guidance, one reaps the fruits, and when one chooses error, one bears the consequences. None will bear or lighten the burden of another. Everyone will be questioned about their own actions and will have the reward for what they have done in this life. Close friends will be of no help to each other.

Yet as a sign of God's grace, He does not leave our guidance dependent only on the signs that are available in the universe. Nor does He leave him to the covenant God has made with human nature before a person is born. He has sent messengers to warn and remind: (17:15) This is certainly an aspect of God's grace which gives everyone ample opportunity to follow His guidance. Only when they have been properly warned and still persist in error does He punish them, if He so wills.

AFFLUENCE LEADING TO DESTRUCTION

The same consistent and universal law that governs the succession of day and night also applies to the destruction of any community: *And when We wanted to cause a town to perish, We commanded ones who are given ease, but they disobeyed therein. So the saying was realized against it. Then, We destroyed it with utter destruction.* (17:16)

The mention of God's will in the sign: *And when We wanted to cause a town to perish, We commanded ones who are given ease, but they disobeyed therein.* It does not mean a commanding will which initiates the cause. It is a will that brings the effect when the cause takes place. Thus the effect becomes inevitable as a result of the operation of God's laws of nature. Similarly, the 'command' in the same statement does not refer to a directive requiring them to indulge in sin. It simply refers to the natural result which comes about in consequence of those people leading such a life. Therefore, the sign states that: *So the saying was realized against it. Then, We destroyed it with utter destruction.* (17:16)

This statement highlights the responsibility of every community, as it makes clear that this law has remained operative since Noah's time: (17:17)

CHOICES AND REWARDS

Someone who wishes to lead a life based solely on this world, looking up to nothing beyond this earth and its pleasures, will have whatever God has assigned to him of these: *Whoever had been wanting that which hastens away, We quicken it for him, whatever We will to whomever We want. Again, We assigned hell for him. He will roast in it, one who is condemned, one who is rejected.* (17:18) He is disgraced by his actions, rejected, suffering severe punishment.

On the other side is a totally different picture: *And whoever wanted the world to come and endeavored for it, endeavoring, while he is one who believes, then, those, their endeavoring had been appreciated.* (17:19) Someone who desires the rich reward of the life to come must pursue his goal diligently.

NO LIMITS TO GOD'S GRACE

Yet both groups receive God's bounty which is open to all and restricted to none. Both those who seek only this world's pleasures and enjoy them to the full and those who pursue the reward of the life to come partake of God's bounty which God grants to all: *To each We furnish relief, these and these, with the gift of your Lord.*

And this gift of your Lord has not been that which is confined. (17:20)

This bounty bestowed by God differs widely, in accordance with people's means, aims and actions. They differ despite the fact that the scope on earth is very limited and its expanse so narrow. How then will they differ when they are in the other place, where the scope is limitless? How can we compare the expanses of the two worlds, when, in God's sight, this world and all that it contains counts for less that the span of a mosquito's wings, as stated by the Prophet? *Look on how We gave advantage to some of them over some others. And, certainly, the world to come will be greater in degrees and greater in excellence.* (17:21)

Assign not another god with God for, then, you will be put as one who is condemned, one who is damned. (17:22) This is a commandment forbidding the association of partners with God and a warning against the results it brings about.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 17:11-17:22

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quranic message commands Prophet Muhammad: Recite your book, Muhammad. You yourself, Muhammad, are sufficient as a reckoner of your account. Your Lord, Muhammad, is sufficient in regard to the sins of His servants. The gift of your Lord, Muhammad, is to furnish relief to either those who want that which hastens away or those who want the world to come. Those who want the world to come endeavor while being one who believes. God appreciates their endeavoring. The gift of your Lord, Muhammad, is not restricted. Do not, Muhammad, assign another god with God.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

Human beings call for worse as well as for good. The human being is hasty. The nighttime and daytime have been created for reckoning the number of years and the reckoning. Everything has been explained distinctly. Every human being will face a reckoning from his book that will be unfolded on the Day of Judgment. Whoever is truly guided is guided for his or her own soul alone. Whoever goes astray goes astray for his or her own soul. No one bears the burden of another person. The saying is realized against those who are given ease and then disobey.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experi-

ences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

None shall bear the burden of another states the Quranic message here. Am I responsible for the actions of others? No one shall bear the burden of another. Each person is responsible on the Day of Judgment for his or her own actions. Everyone is responsible to God for his or her own actions. A person only needs to be concerned with his or her own actions and not with the actions of others. We are each responsible to God for our own actions.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I tried using writing as a way to learn by writing summaries in my own words of important points from the Quranic signs here.
I was able to formulate test questions.
I wrote out answers to my own questions.
I was able to get in touch with my emotions.
I learned that whenever I feel some negative emotion, I ask myself:
What, exactly, is the thinking leading to this emotion?
For example, if I are angry, ask myself, what is the thinking that is making me angry?
What other ways could I think about this situation?
For example, can I think about the situation so as to see the humor in it and what is pitiable in it?
If I can, concentrate on that thinking and my emotions, I will (eventually) shift to match them.

Lesson 50(3). Critical Thinking Strategy Utilizing Concepts, Definitions, Principles, Vocabulary

What is a concept?

What is a concept? A concept is an idea or thought, especially a generalized idea of a thing or of a class of things. The Quranic text expresses clusters of concepts or ideas. It is these concepts that it uses that students need to learn to identify, contrast them with other of its concepts and clarify what they mean and what students include and exclude because of them. Quranic clusters of concepts include, for example, types of people: believer-disbelievers-ungrateful-hypocrites, living-creation; false-deity concept; sacred text concept. The latter, sacred text concept includes four concepts: The Quran itself, the Gospel, the Torah (the first five books of the Bible also known as the Pentateuch revealed to Moses), and the Psalms.

Quranic Chapter 17: The Journey by Night (al-Isra)

Signs 17:23-17:30

Makkah: *And **your** Lord decreed that you worship*
none but Him!
And kindness to the ones who are one's parents.
*If they reach old age with **you**—one of them or both of them—then,*
you will not say to them a word of disrespect
nor scold them,
but say a generous saying to them. (17:23)
*And make **yourself** low to them,*
the wing of the sense of humility through mercy.
And say: O my Lord! Have mercy on them
even as they raised me when I was small. (17:24)
Your Lord is greater in knowledge of what is within yourselves.
If you be ones in accord with morality, truly, He is Forgiving
to those who had been penitent. (17:25)
Madinah (17:26)
Makkah: *Truly, the ones who spend extravagantly*
had been brothers/sisters of the satans
and Satan had been ungrateful to his Lord. (17:27)
*And if **you** have turned aside from them,*
*looking for mercy from **your** Lord for which **you** have hoped,*
then, say to them a saying softly. (17:28)
*And make not **your** hand be one that is restricted to **your** neck*
as a miser nor extend it to its utmost expansion as a prodigal

*so that **you** will sit as one who is reproached,*
one who is denuded. (17:29)
*Truly, **your** Lord extends the provision for whom He wills*
and He tightens for whom He wills.
Truly, He, He had been Aware, Seeing of His servants. (17:30)

COMMENTARY°

A CODE BASED ON JUSTICE

In the preceding passages, which comprises the first twenty-two signs of chapter 17, the rules of action and reward, guidance and error, earnings and reckoning are linked to the great universal law that governs the succession of night and day. In the current passage, the rules for behavior, manners, individual and social duties are linked to belief in God's Oneness. Indeed this belief provides the essential tie to which all other ties are linked, within the family, community and humanity as a whole.

*And **your** Lord decreed that you worship none but Him!* (17:23) This order to offer all worship to God alone follows the one prohibiting the association of partners with God. It takes the form of a decisive ruling to be implemented without fail, by all humanity. The term, *qada*, used in the Arabic text and translated as 'decreed', signifies a final verdict imparting additional emphasis to an already emphatic order that also uses the construction of a negation and exception: *You worship none but Him.* The mode is one of total emphasis and stress. When this basic ruling is well established, individual and community duties are outlined. These rely on a firm belief in the One God. Therefore, motives and goals behind actions and practices work towards the same end.

KINDNESS TO ONE'S PARENTS

The most important bond next to that of faith is the family. Therefore, the chapter links kindness to parents with the worship of God, in order to emphasize its importance in God's sight: (17: 23-17:24) With inspirational expression that is full of tenderness, the Quran enhances our feelings of compassion towards our parents.

The chapter then imparts an air of tenderness to the whole atmosphere. It engenders memories of childhood, of compassion, love and tender care: *If they reach old age with you—one of them or both of them.* (17:23) Old age commands veneration, and the weakness of the elderly imparts certain feelings. Use of the phrase, 'in your care', describes an elderly person weakened by advancing years needing shelter and care. Therefore, sons and daughters are told: *Then, **you** will not say to them a word of disrespect nor scold them* .(17:23)

This is the first step in taking care of one's parents and being kindly to them. Sons and daughters must never use words which suggest their being vexed or bothered by their parents, or say anything that betrays disrespect. On the contrary, they must *but say a generous saying to them.* (17:23) This is a higher and more positive step. What sons and daughters say to their parents must always be coupled with genuine respect. *And make yourself low to them, the wing of the sense of humility through mercy.* (17:24) At this point the Quran uses very tender words to touch our hearts and consciences. Mercy and compassion are so heightened that they border on humility, making the son and daughter too respectful to look their parents straight in the face, but willing to obey them. It is as if such tenderness spreads wings over one's parents. This is followed by a prayer: *And say: O my Lord! Have mercy on them even as they raised me when I was small.* (17:24)

Since all feelings, actions and reactions are related to faith in the context of the chapter, it adds a final comment, referring all matters to God who knows people's intentions and what lies behind words and actions: (17:25)

The Quran speaks strongly against squandering, which is defined as spending one's money in the wrong way. If one spends all one's money for rightful purposes, one is not a squanderer, but if one spends a small amount in the wrong way, then one is. Thus, it is not the amount which one spends, but the purpose for which one spends it. Therefore, squanderers are indeed Satan's brothers because they spend their money for evil purposes, and to finance their disobedience of God. This makes them Satan's cronies. It must be remembered that *Satan had been ungrateful to his Lord.* (17:27)

When a person does not have the means to do his duty by relatives, the needy and he finds it embarrassing to meet them face to face, he should turn to God praying to Him to give him good provisions and to provide for those in need. At the same time, he should promise the needy that he will give to them whenever his means improve. At the same time, he should speak to them kindly. He must not be bored with them, nor should he remain silent and so embarrass them. A kind word serves a good purpose and opens up hope: *And if you have turned aside from them, looking for mercy from your Lord for which you have hoped, then, say to them a saying softly.* (17:28)

Within the context of prohibiting the squandering of money, the Quran orders moderation in all spending: (17:29) Striking a proper balance is the Quranic message.

The order to seek a middle course is followed with a comment stating that the provider for all is God, and it is He who may give

abundant provisions or may give only in a tight measure. Yet the One who gives to all is the One who orders a middle course: (17:30) Whichever way He gives to any one of His servants is determined on the basis of His wisdom. He commands all to follow a course of moderation, prohibiting both extremes of miserliness and careless extravagance on the basis of His perfect knowledge of what is most suitable for all His servants at all times. It is He who has revealed the Quran to always guide along the straight path.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 17:23-17:30

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

An important point to be noted in connection with all these instructions is that matters which an individual needs to implement in person, as an individual, are phrased in the singular form. By contrast, the instructions that are addressed to the community are given in the plural. Thus we see that orders to be kind to parents, to be charitable to relatives, the needy and stranded travelers, and to refrain from extravagance, maintain a middle way between being tight-fisted and spendthrift, to ascertain the truth in every situation and refrain from showing arrogance and conceit, are all given in the singular form. This is due to the fact that responsibility in these areas is shouldered by the individual. On the other hand, the plural form is used to express the instructions prohibiting the killing of children and those concerning the protection of an orphan's property, honoring promises and pledges, and giving fair weight and measure, because these concern the community as a whole.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?

8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quran says to be kind to one's parents. How does the Quran say one should treat one's parents? Do not scold them or say a word of disrespect. Be humble towards them. Pray for them. Be good to our parents who raised us. One should be good to one's parents. God will reward those who are good to their parents. Our parents have been good to us.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

DRAW A CONCEPT MAP
Alternatives to outlining are concept-mapping.
How do I map?
First reject the idea of an outline, or of paragraphs using sentences.
Think in terms of key words or symbols that represent ideas and words:

Concept mapping: This is a type of brainstorming where you place the title/subject as the main idea, then develop a "mind map" around it. It can be effective either in a group or by yourself:

Pre-questions: Often chapters in texts provide organizing questions.
You can also write out a series of questions you expect to be answered when reading: Examples:

Definition: What is....? Where does ... fit? What group does ... belong to?

Characteristics: How would I describe...? What does ... look like? What are its parts?

Examples What is a good example of ...? What are similar examples that share attributes but differ in some way?

Experience What experience have I had with ....? What can I imagine about ...?

Visual Aids: Pictures and other visual material can activate your prior knowledge. Use the Internet to search for pictures related to your title/topic to give you visual images of what you are about to read.

50(4). Critical Thinking Strategy
Comparing Analogous Situations: Reframe Insights to New Contexts

The power of a Quranic concept is not limited by the ability students have to use it. Quranic thinkers make use of concepts in order to better their skills in understanding the Quran. It is through practice that they use these concepts by applying them to new situations, that is, by putting the concepts into practice.

It was revealed to the Prophet of Islam to take this form of tribal mentality and change it into a most beautiful and deep rite founded upon the unity of God and the oneness of humanity.

Quranic Chapter 17: The Journey by Night (al-Isra)
Signs 17:31-17:40

Makkah: *And kill not your children dreading want.*
We will provide for them and for you.
Truly, the killing of them had been a grave inequity. (17:31)
Madinah (17:32)
Madinah (17:33)
Makkah: *And come not near the property of the orphan,*
but with what is fairer until he reaches the coming of age.
And live up to the compact.
Truly, the compact had been
that which will be asked about. (17:34)[22]
And live up to the full measure when you wanted to measure.
And weigh with a scale, one that is straight.
That is best and fairer in interpretation. (17:35)[23]
And follow up not of what there is not for ***you*** *knowledge of it.*
Truly, having the ability to hear and sight and mind,
each of those will have been that which is asked. (17:36)
And walk not on the earth exultantly.
Truly, ***you*** *will never make a hole in the earth*
and will never reach the mountains in height. (17:37)[24]
All of that had been bad deeds,
ones that are disliked by ***your*** *Lord.* (17:38)
That is of what ***your*** *Lord revealed to* ***you*** *of wisdom.*
So make not up with God another god
that ***you*** *would be cast down into hell*
as one who is reproached, as one who is rejected. (17:39)
Selected your Lord for you sons

and taken for Himself females
from among the angels?
Truly, you, you say a serious saying! (17:40)

COMMENTARY°

SETTING VALUES RIGHT

As the Quran makes this statement clear, it follows it with reference to the fact that some people in pre-Quranic days used to kill their daughters for fear of want and poverty. It then adds a clear order prohibiting the killing of children for any such reason. Since God is the One who determines the means people have, there is no connection, then, between poverty and the number or sex of the children they have. The matter is fully in God's hands. When people purge their thoughts of the false notion of any direct relationship between poverty and having children, and when they adopt the correct concept in this regard, there is no reason for that ghastly crime which flies in the face of human nature and the right to life: *And kill not your children dreading want. We will provide for them and for you. Truly, the killing of them had been a grave inequity.* (17:31)

The fact that people in pre-Quranic Arabia used to bury their daughters alive provides a clear case of how far false religious beliefs can affect human life so as to establish such horrendous crime as an acceptable social norm. It testifies to the fact that life is affected by the sort of beliefs people adopt. Indeed faith cannot remain isolated from human life.

PERFECT HONESTY

Having completed its instructions concerning the sanctity of people's honor and life, the chapter tackles the question of orphans' property and the requirement of fulfilling one's promises and pledges towards them: (17:34)

The Quran makes it clear that a Muslim's life, honor and property are to be protected and preserved. The chapter, however, makes a special case concerning the property of an orphan, ensuring its full protection. It forbids the mere coming near it except for what is best for the orphan. That is because an orphan is too weak to manage his property or defend it against assault. Therefore, the Muslim community is required to take proper care of the orphan and his property until he comes of age and is able to take care of his own affairs.

Here we see that the order not to come near the property of an orphan, except with the best of intentions, is given in the plural in order to make the whole community responsible for the protection of orphans and their property. It is then a collective responsibility.

Looking after an orphan's property is an act of trust which constitutes a pledge by the whole community. Therefore, it is followed with an order to honor all promises and pledges: (17:34)

Just Weight and Measure

The code of conduct the chapter outlines also speaks about fairness in commercial dealings: *And live up to the full measure when you wanted to measure. And weigh with a scale, one that is straight.* (17:35) The relevance of fulfilling promises and giving fair and full measure and weight is readily apparent, both in meaning and expression. This makes the progress from one to the other easy and smooth. To be fair in transactions and to give full weight and measure are actions which mark honest dealing and good faith. Thus internal dealings within the community are set on the right footing which promotes trust and honesty, and ensures blessings all round: *That is best and fairer in interpretation.* (17:35) It is good in this life as it maintains fairness, and better in the hereafter as it ensures good reward.

Accountability for All Actions

A basic characteristic of the Quranic message is that it is straightforward, clear and transparent. Nothing is permitted on the basis of suspicion, myth or unsubstantiated impression: *And follow up not of what there is not for you knowledge of it. Truly, having the ability to hear and sight and mind, each of those will have been that which is asked.* (17:36) These few words establish a complete method for the human mind and heart, incorporating the scientific approach that humanity has begun to apply only recently. It adds, however, honesty and fear of God. This is an advantage the Quranic message adds over cold rational approaches that are devoid of spirituality. Certain knowledge must be the only basis for judgement or conviction. Whatever is not certain must never constitute such a basis.

These orders and instructions that are closely linked to the faith based on God's Oneness are concluded with an order prohibiting conceit and arrogance: *And walk not on the earth exultantly.* (17:37)

The Quran puts the conceited and arrogant face to face with their humbleness and powerlessness: *Truly, you will never make a hole in the earth and will never reach the mountains in height.* (17:37) Physically we are small and insignificant, particularly when compared to giant creation. But we are strong when we rely on God's power, honorable with His honor, and noble with His spirit which God has breathed into us. God has given us all this so that we always remem-

ber and remain conscious of Him.

As we have seen, these instructions are mainly concerned with prohibiting evil action and improper behavior. Their outline concludes with declaring God's disapproval of them: *All of that had been bad deeds, ones that are disliked by your Lord.* (17:38)

This outline of the Quranic code of conduct is brought to an end by showing its details again linked to faith in God's Oneness, which was also stated at the outset of this passage. This is coupled with a warning against associating partners with God. Furthermore, we are told that this code is only a part of the wisdom to which the Quran guides people: *That is of what your Lord revealed to you of wisdom. So make not up with God another god that you would be cast down into hell as one who is reproached, as one who is rejected.* (17:39)

Thus the ending is akin to the opening, with both emphasizing the basis on which the Quranic message builds its structure for human life, namely, the concept of God's oneness. For it is to God that all worship should be addressed.

Selected your Lord for you sons and taken for Himself females from among the angels? Truly, you, you say a serious saying! (17:40) This question implies a sarcastic response to what the ungrateful used to do, as they described the angels as God's daughters. God is indeed too exalted to take to Himself a son or a wife, and He is too sublime to have any partner or associate. The sign also ridicules the assigning of daughters to God, when the Arabs considered girls to be of lesser status than boys. They indeed killed their daughters for fear of poverty or shame. Nevertheless they considered angels to be female and made them God's daughters.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 17:31; 17:34-17:40

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The humility which the Quran calls upon people to adopt, decrying at the same time all types of conceit, is a mark of maintaining proper relations with God and one's fellow human beings, and a proper personal and social attitude. No one abandons such good manners except the petty and the conceited. Such people are disliked by God because they overlook His favors which they enjoy, and are hated by human beings for their arrogance. By contrast, God humiliates an arrogant person so as he rates himself highly while people look down upon him.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view**

based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions,** (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quran commands that you not to kill your children. Why would people kill their children? God will provide for them and for you. The Quran forbids abortion after a certain number of days. Killing one's children is because of fear of poverty. The Quran says that this is a grave inequity. There are those who kill their children dreading poverty.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to respond to the following in class:

What evidence do the above signs give?
Why would the facts be true?
What assumptions are you making?
Do you have reason to think your assumptions are true?

50(5). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
DEVELOPING ONE'S PERSPECTIVE: CREATING OR EXPLORING ARGUMENTS

THE IDOLATERS LISTEN TO THE PROPHET'S RECITATION AS THEY BEGIN TO DEVELOP THEIR PERSPECTIVE:

A group of the Quraysh idolaters had gone out by night to listen to the Messenger as he was praying in his house. Everyone of them chose a place to sit where he could listen, and none knew where the others were sitting. So they passed the night listening to him, until as the dawn rose, they dispersed.

On the way home they met and reproached one another, and one said to the other: Don't do it again, for if one of the light-minded fools sees you, you will arouse suspicion in his mind.

Then they went away, until on the second night everyone of them returned again to his place, and they passed the night listening. Then at dawn the same thing happened again, and again on the third night, when on the morrow they said to one another: We will not go away until we take a solemn obligation that we will not return. This they did and then dispersed.

In the morning al-Akhnas went to the house of Abu Sufyan, and asked him to tell him his opinion of what he had heard from Muhammad. He replied: By God, I heard things that I know, and know what was meant by them, and I heard things whose meaning I don't know, nor what was intended by them.

Al-Akhnas replied: I feel precisely the same.

Then he left him and went to Abu Jahl's house, and asked him the same question. He answered: What did I hear! We and the Abd al-Manaf clan have been rivals in honor. They have fed the poor, and so have we; they have assumed others' burdens, and so have we; they have been generous, and so have we, until we have progressed side by side, and we were like two horses of equal speed.

They said: We have a Messenger to whom revelation comes from heaven, and when shall we attain anything like that? By God, we will never believe in him and treat him as truthful. Then al-Akhnas got up and left him.[25]

QURANIC CHAPTER 17: THE JOURNEY BY NIGHT (AL-ISRA)
SIGNS 17:41-17:52

Makkah: *And, certainly, We diversified*
in this, the Quran,
that they recollect. And it increases them only in aversion. (17:41)

Say: If there had been gods along with Him as they say,
then, they would, certainly, be looking for a way
to the Possessor of the Throne. (17:42)
Glory be to Him! And exalted is He
above what they say, greatly exalted. (17:43)
The seven heavens glorify Him and the earth
and whatever is in and on them.
There is not a thing but it glorifies His praise,
except you understand not their glorification.
Truly, He had been Forbearing, Forgiving. (17:44)
*And when **you** had recited the Quran,*
*We made between **you** and between those who believe not*
in the world to come a partition obstructing their vision. (17:45)
And We laid sheaths on their hearts so that they not understand it
and heaviness in their ears.
*And when **you** had remembered **your** Lord in the Quran*
that He is One, they turned their backs in aversion. (17:46)
We are greater in knowledge of what they listen
*for when they listen to **you**.*
And when they conspire secretly,
when the ones who are unjust say:
You follow but a bewitched man. (17:47)
*Look on how they propounded parables for **you**.*
So they went astray and they are not able to be on a way. (17:48)
And they say: When we had been bones and broken bits
will we be ones who are raised up in a new creation? (17:49)
Say: Should you be rocks or iron, (17:50)
or any creation that is more troublesome
in your breasts to raise up?
Then, they will say: Who will cause us to return?
Say: He Who originated you the first time.
*Then, they will nod their heads at **you** and say:*
When will it be?
Say: Perhaps it is near. (17:51)
It will be a Day when He will call to you
and you will respond to Him with His praise
and you will think that you lingered in expectation
but a little. (17:52)

COMMENTARY°

GOD: THE ONE AND GLORIOUS

The second passage of this chapter begins and ends with a strong emphasis on God's Oneness and the prohibition of associating any

partners with Him. Within its two ends, it contains a number of orders, prohibitions and values that are all based on the central principle of God's oneness. The present passage begins and ends with the denunciation of the very concept of assigning a son or a partner to God, explaining its absurdity. It states that the whole universe functions on the basis of believing in God as one, having no partners:

Truly, you, you say a serious saying! (17:40) It is enormously odd, impudent, false and outlandish. *And, certainly, We diversified in this, the Quran, that they recollect. And it increases them only in aversion.* (17:41) The Quran preaches the faith of God's Oneness, presenting it in a variety of ways, styles and methods, so that people may 'take warning'. Indeed accepting the faith based on God's Oneness does not require more than a reminder and a reference to uncorrupted human nature. It only needs to reflect on the various signs presented in the universe. But they only grow in their aversion to this faith whenever they listen to the Quran. They show that they are averse to the faith the Quran preaches, and averse to the Quran itself, lest it clearly show the fallacy of their erroneous beliefs based on myth and superstition.

Here also the chapter goes part of the way with them to make its argument about their alleged deities. It states that had such deities existed, they themselves would have tried to get closer to God and believe in Him: *Say: If there had been gods along with Him as they say, then, they would, certainly, be looking for a way to the Possessor of the Throne.* (17:42)

Mention of the Throne here indicates God's clear exaltation above all creatures, including those they claim to be deities alongside Him. They are below His Throne, which means that they cannot be 'with Him'. This is followed by a clear statement glorifying God: *Glory be to Him! And exalted is He above what they say, greatly exalted.* (17:43)

The chapter then portrays the whole universe, with all creatures living in it, under God's Throne. They all turn to God glorifying Him: *The seven heavens glorify Him and the earth and whatever is in and on them. There is not a thing but it glorifies His praise, except you understand not their glorification. Truly, He had been Forbearing, Forgiving.* (17:44)

The leaders of the Quraysh, the Prophet's own tribesmen who rejected his call, tried hard to prevent their hearts and souls from responding positively to the truth of the Quran. As a result, God raised an invisible curtain between them and the Prophet, and placed coverings on their hearts preventing them from understanding it. Their ears were in a state similar to deafness, which meant that they could

not understand its message.

BRINGING THE DEAD BACK TO LIFE

Such was what they said about the Quran and the Messenger who recited it. They also denied resurrection and the life to come: (17: 49-17:52)

The concept of resurrection was the subject of a long controversy between the Prophet and the ungrateful. The Quran relates much of this argument. Yet the whole issue is very clear and simple for anyone who contemplates the nature of life and death, resurrection and the gathering of all creation. The Quran explains it in full on various occasions. Yet people could not take it in its simple and clear nature. They could not imagine how a person could be brought back to life after the body had decomposed: *And they say: When we had been bones and broken bits will we be ones who are raised up in a new creation?* (17:49)

The reply comes in the form of an instruction to the Prophet to say to them: (17:50-17:51) The bones and dust may still have some traces or memory of life, but iron and stones seem even further away from life. Therefore, they are told to be stones or iron or any other form that cannot ever be associated with life. Even if they are made of material that is least imagined to have life, God will bring them alive.

Then, they will say: Who will cause us to return? Say: He Who originated you the first time. (17:51) Who is it that brings bones and dust, or even more lifeless objects, back to life? *Say: He Who originated you the first time.* (17:51) The answer puts the whole question into its proper perspective, which is both simple and direct. The One who originated them the first time is able to bring them back to life. Yet this reply is ignored: *Then, they will nod their heads at you* in disbelief. (17:51) They simply shake their heads in disapproval, or even in ridicule. They try to make this sound too far fetched by asking: *When will it be?* (17:51) The Prophet is told to reply: *Say: Perhaps it is near.* (17:51) The Prophet does not know its exact timing, but it may very well be nearer than they think. They should fear then lest it happen when they are engaged in such opposition and ridicule.

The chapter then paints a speedy image of what happens when that event takes place, as it will indeed do: *It will be a Day when He will call to you and you will respond to Him with His praise.* (17:52) The image shows those people who were bent on denying the resurrection rising up to respond to the call that brings them back to life. As they do, they praise God in clear terms. They have nothing else to say apart from praising God. This is a strange response from those

who were dogged in their denial of resurrection and the Day of Judgement altogether. They simply rise, saying nothing except: "Praise be God, praise be God." Thus this whole life is shown to be very brief, like a flickering light: *And you will think that you lingered in expectation but a little.* (17:52)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 17:41-17:52

WHO IS GOD?

God diversified in this, the Quran, that they recollect. Glory be to Him. Exalted is He above what they say. The seven heavens glorify Him and the earth and whatever is in and on them. There is not a thing but it glorifies His praise except human beings do not understand their glorification. God is greater in knowledge of what the ungrateful listen to and when they secretly conspire, when the unjust say to the people: You follow a man who is bewitched.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quranic message tells the Prophet to say to the ungrateful: If there had been gods along with Him, they would be looking for a way to become the Possessor of the Throne. It says: If you, Muhammad, had recited the Quran, God has made a partition between you, Muhammad, and those who do not believe in the world to come. Their hearts have been sheathed and there is a heaviness in their ears. When you, Muhammad, remember your Lord in the Quran and that He is One, the ungrateful turn away in aversion. Look on the stories and parables they say to you, Muhammad. Say to the ungrateful when they do not believe in the Day of Resurrection: Should you be rocks or iron or any creation, will you be difficult to raise up? The one who Originated the first time will cause you to return. When they want to know when the promise will be, say: Perhaps it is near.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

It is a powerful and majestic scene in which we see every stone, large and small, every seed and leaf, every flower and fruit, every little shoot and every tree, every insect and reptile, every animal and human being, every creature that walks the earth, swims in the water or floats in the air, in short, all creatures in the whole universe glorifying God and turning to Him in submission. We are filled with awe as we sense that everything that comes within our vision or stays beyond it comes alive. 'Whenever we stretch our hands out to touch something, and whenever we put our feet to step over something, we feel that it is alive, glorifying God.

The ungrateful say: When we are bones and broken bits, will be raised up in a new creation? Who will cause us to return. When will it be? the ungrateful ask.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message confirms the Resurrection for the ungrateful. When we are bones and broken bits, will we be raised up in a new creation? Even if they wer rocks or iron or any other creation, they would be raised up. Everyone will be raised up on the Day of Resurrection. God can create a new creation just as He originated the first one. Each person is responsible for his or her own actions that will be witnessed on the Day of Judgment. There will be a Resurrection.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I followed the following guidelines:

Arrive on time for class.

Teachers do not take lateness lightly

Position yourself in the classroom to focus on the subject matter; consider the best location for: listening, asking questions, seeing visual material, discussion (not only with the teacher, but with your classmates as well).

Lesson 50(6). Critical Thinking Strategy

Making Interdisciplinary Connections

Quranic knowledge can be divided into multiple categories as this knowledge served as the basis for the development of Islamic sciences over the centuries. There are concepts that are basic to the study of Anthropology, History, Political Science, Mathematics, Logic and so forth. Understanding the interdisciplinary connections of the Quranic sacred text, take relevant concepts, knowledge and insight from the Quranic signs so that you are continuously finding connections between various categories of knowledge whether it be the basic principles of the arts or science.

Interdisciplinary Connections

Science: In doing research in the sciences, Quranic thinkers record from in depth observation, collecting as much information as possible and then critiquing their analysis of the gathered information so that they can draw the best possible inference through the use of inductive reasoning. *He Who taught by the pen. He taught the human being what he knows not.* (96:4-96:5)

Politics: Quranic thinkers try to obtain their own inferences after listening to .... *what is said and follow the fairer of it. Those are those whom God guided. Those, they are imbued with intuition.* (39:17-39:18) After listening to all opinions, they try to arrive at the best of the varying opinions *as you differ in what you say.* (51:8)

Education: Education in schools after listening to .... *what is said and follow the fairer of it* calls on students to learn all types of concepts, faiths and ideas and then choose their own.

Psychology: Our ability to reason (our cognitive system: *Will you not be reasonable?*) comes from our rational soul (*nafs-i natiqah*). We use our reason to help us regulate our animal soul (see Quran 12:53; *nafs-i ammarah*), our emotions and behavior by keeping them in a state of equilibrium, balance or moderation, on the Straight Path.

Note for the Teacher: Do not allow the somewhat arbitrary distinctions between academic subjects to control their thinking. When considering issues which transcend subjects, they bring relevant concepts, knowledge, and insights from many subjects to the analysis. They make use of insights into one subject to inform their understanding of other subjects. There are always connections between subjects: language and logic; history, geography, psychology, anthropology, physiology; politics, geography, science, ecology; math, science, economics.[26]

Quranic Chapter 17: The Journey by Night (al-Isra)
Signs 17:53-17:60

Makkah: *And say to My servants*

they should say what is fairer.
Truly, Satan sows enmity among them.
Truly, Satan had been to the human being, a clear enemy. (17:53)
Your Lord is greater in knowledge of you.
If He wills, He will have mercy on you.
And if He wills, He will punish you.
And We sent you not as a trustee over them. (17:54)

Makkah: Book 28: David (17:55)

Say: Call to those whom you claimed other than Him.
Then, they are neither in control to remove harm
from you nor revise it. (17:56)

Madinah (17:57)

Makkah: *And there is not a town but We will be*
ones who cause it to perish before the Day of Resurrection,
or We will be ones who punish it with a severe punishment
— that which had been inscribed in the Book. (17:58)
And nothing prevented Us from sending the signs,
but that the ancient ones denied them.

Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (17:59)

Makkah: *And mention when We said to you:*
Truly, your Lord enclosed humanity.
And We made not the dream that We caused you to see,
but as a test for humanity—and the tree—
one that was cursed in the Quran.
And We frighten them,
but it only increases them in great defiance. (17:60)

COMMENTARY°

SATAN IS THE HUMAN BEING'S OPEN ENEMY

After it has described their attitude of ridiculing God's promise and the Prophet's message, the chapter turns away from those who deny the life to come and resurrection. It has something to say about the believers, instructing the Prophet to direct them to say only what is best. They should always be in the habit of saying a good word: (17:53)

And say to My servants they should say what is fairer. It is a general order that applies in all situations and positions. They should choose the best to say. *Truly, Satan sows enmity among them.* (17:53) He tries to build on every slip of a person's tongue to spread an air of alienation between brothers. Good words simply foil his attempts and protect the bond of brotherhood among all believers.

The chapter then returns to those ungrateful who responded to the call to rise on the Day of Judgment. All destiny is in God's hands:

He may forgive or punish. They will have to face God's judgement. The Prophet is no more than a Messenger. He is not their protector against God's will: (17:54) God's knowledge is absolute. Whatever He may determine of punishment or forgiveness is based on His knowledge. The Prophet's mission is completed when he has conveyed his message. God's knowledge encompasses all that is in heaven and earth, including the angels, prophets, human beings and jinn, as well as other creatures which are known only to God.

COMPETITION TO BE CLOSER TO GOD

This passage, which begins with a definitive negation of the concept of God having a son or partner before calling on people to turn to God alone in all situations, concludes with a challenge to those who associate partners with God. The challenge is simply that they should call on those partners to remove any harm that befalls them, should God decide to punish them, or that they should divert His punishment to others: (17:56) No one can remove hardship or change its nature or recipient except God Himself. He alone is in control of the destinies of all creation.

The passage, then, ends on the same note on which it began, illustrating the hollow nature of polytheistic beliefs and showing clearly that God is the only Lord in the universe. Human beings should turn to Him alone with their appeals and worship.

CLEAR WARNINGS, INCREASED TRANSGRESSION

There is no community but We shall destroy or severely punish before the Day of Resurrection. That is laid down in Our decree. (17:58)

Miraculous events took place in the past in order to endorse the messages preached by God's messengers, and to warn people against rejecting them: (17:59)

The preternatural events that took place at the time of the Prophet, or happened to him, such as that of his night journey, were not meant as proof of his message. These were given as a test for his people. We said to you that your Lord encompasses all humanity. We have made the vision which We have shown you, as also the tree cursed in this Quran, only a trial for people. We seek to put fear in their hearts, but it only increases their gross transgression. (17:60)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 17:53-17:60

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quranic message tells the Prophet to say to the servants of God: Say what is the fairer thing to say. Satan is an enemy to you, a clear enemy. We

did not send you, Muhammad, as a trustee over them Mention when We said to you, Muhammad, truly, your Lord enclosed humanity. We made the dream that We caused you, Muhammad, to see as a test for humanity.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quran says for the Prophet to tell the servants of God to say that which is fairer. Does the Quranic message ask the believers to be fair and to say what is fair? The Quranic message tells the Prophet to tell the servants of God that they should say that which is fairer. To speak the truth is to say what is fair. Those who say what is fair will be counted among God's servants. There are those who do not say what is fair.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I followed the guidelines below:

- Do your homework!
- Read critically; form your own opinions
- Review your notes
- from the previous lecture and reading for the day
- Communicate immediately with professors about any study problems

LESSON 50(7). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE

Known values of Quranic thinking include self-development (*jihad al-akbar*) and social improvement (*ummah* as a middle community). Both of these require the recognition of gaps between ideals and practice as the gap causes a loss of truth and consistency. This strategy of recognizing the gaps between facts and ideals is connected with developing integrity and good faith.

QURANIC CHAPTER 17: THE JOURNEY BY NIGHT (AL-ISRA)

SIGNS 17:61-17:70

Makkah: Book 25: Adam (17:61)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam (17:62)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam (17:63)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam (17:64)
Makkah: Book 25: Adam (17:65)

Makkah: *Your Lord is He Who propels for you*
the boats on the sea
so that you be looking for His grace.
Truly, He had been Compassionate towards you. (17:66)
And when harm afflicted you upon the sea,
whomever you call to besides Him went astray.
But when He delivered you to dry land, you turned aside.
And the human being had been ungrateful. (17:67)
Were you safe that He causes not the shore of dry land to swallow
you up or send a sand storm against you?
Again, you will find no trustee for you. (17:68)
Or were you safe that He will not cause you to return to it
another time and send against you a hurricane of wind
and drown you because you were ungrateful?
Again, you will not find for yourselves
an advocate against Us in it. (17:69)
And, certainly, We held the Children of Adam in esteem.
And We carried them on dry land and on the sea
and provided them with what is good.
And We gave them advantage over many
of whomever We created with excellence. (17:70)

COMMENTARY°

ASPECTS OF GOD'S FAVORS

Satan tries to inflict only evil on humanity, yet there are those

who listen to his temptations and do his bidding, turning their backs on God's guidance. God is always merciful to them, provides them with help, support and guidance, facilitates their living, saves them from harm, removes their distress and responds to them when they pray to Him to lift their suffering and hardship. Yet despite all this, they turn away, denying Him and the message He has sent them: (17:66-17:67)

The chapter then shows them the other extreme. After a smooth phase in their journey, they experience great turbulence in high seas. Enormous waves seem to carry their vessel and throw it around in every direction. They realize then that they have no real support and no saviour except God. They turn to Him in a sincere prayer, addressed to Him alone: *And when harm afflicted you upon the sea, whomever you call to besides Him went astray.* (17:67)

But we remains the same. When the hardship is over and we feel himself steady, moving easily on dry land, the experience we suffered disappears gradually from our mind, and as a result we forget God. We then allows our desire to get the better of us and overshadow the beckoning of our uncorrupted nature: *But when He delivered you to dry land, you turned aside. And the human being had been ungrateful.* (17:67) This applies to all people except those who maintain their strong bond with God. Their hearts continue to have the light of right guidance.

At this point the chapter makes a direct and emotional address to people's consciences, depicting the danger they left at sea as though it were chasing them on land, or engulfing them again when they return to sea. It wants them to feel that safety and security can only be ascertained with God's protection. It cannot be guaranteed at sea or on land, with easy waves and moderate wind, or with a comfortable home or fortified shelter: (17:68-17:69)

A Special Honor for the Human Being

God has honored us by making natural forces on earth subservient to our will and endeavor, and by making other natural forces operating in the universe helpful to us. A further aspect of the honor God has given us is seen in the reception given us when we were first created. It was a reception in which the angels prostrated themselves in a gesture of respect, because God Himself declared that we are to be honored. Then there comes the additional honor when God states in His book, sent down from on high and which He guaranteed to remain intact for the rest of time, that we are given a position of honor. *And, certainly, We held the Children of Adam in esteem. And We carried them on dry land and on the sea* (17:70) This is accom-

plished by making natural laws fit with human nature and its abilities. Had these laws been at odds with human nature, life would have been impossible to sustain on earth. Indeed we are weak when our strength is measured against the natural forces that operate on land and sea, but we are given the ability to live on earth and to make use of its resources and treasures. This is all an aspect of God's grace. *And provided them with what is good.* (17:70)

Indeed we are placed in charge of a complete world which includes countless blessings. *And We gave them advantage over many of whomever We created with excellence.* (17:70) Indeed, God has favored human beings by giving them mastery of this wide planet. Furthermore, He placed in their nature such abilities that make them unique among God's creatures.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 17:66-17:70

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Prophet told his people of God's promise and what he had seen in his true vision. This included the tree of *Zaqqum* which grows in hell. It is a tree which God cites as a warning to ungrateful. However, they continued to deny the message and whatever the Prophet said. Abu Jahl, the arch-enemy of the Quranic message even ridiculed the tree, playing on the sense given by its name. He asked for dates and butter and mixed them together and ate them. He said to those around: Come and eat. This is the only *Zaqqum* we know.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The present passage speaks about the ultimate destiny of all humanity, as it is determined by God's justice. All cities and communities will suffer death before the Day of Judgment, although some may suffer a doom of some sort should they incur something that deserves God's punishment. Thus, every living creature will have come to its life's end, either by natural death or by destruction.

God has honored humanity, favoring the human race over many of His creatures. He honored us when He created us in this particular fashion, giving us a nature that combines the characteristics of clay, from which we were made, and the spirit that was breathed into us. Thus we combine elements of heaven and earth in our constitution. God has also honored us by placing in our nature such faculties that make us able to take charge of the earth, able to be active and make changes in it. Thus we initiate and produce new things, combine things together and analyse complex matters in order to elevate life to the highest standard attainable.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message here states: There is no protector other than God. Who protects us from harm? We have no advocate other than God. When some trouble afflicts us, we turn to God. God is our protector and trustee. We turn to God when we face difficulties, but then they are gone, we forget to be grateful. God is our protector.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I asked myself how I would follow up with the question I asked.
Doing that, I was able to answer what that told me about my question.

LESSON 50(8). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING

An essential requirement of critical thinking is the ability to think about thinking, to engage in what is sometimes called "metacognition." One possible definition of critical thinking is the art of thinking about your thinking while you're thinking in order to make your thinking better: more clear, more accurate, more fair. It is precisely at the level of "thinking about thinking" that most critical thinking stands in contrast to uncritical thinking. Critical thinkers can analyze thought—take it apart and put it together again. For the uncritical, thoughts are "just there". "I think what I think, don't ask me why." The analytical vocabulary in the English language (such terms as assume, infer, conclude, criteria, point of view: relevance: issue, elaborate, ambiguous, objection, support, bias, justify, perspective, contradiction, consistent, credibility, evidence, interpret, distinguish) enables us to think more precisely about our thinking. We are in a better position to assess reasoning (our own, as well as that of others) when we can use analytic vocabulary with accuracy and ease.

QURANIC EXAMPLES OF THINKING ABOUT THINKING

The Quran encourages thinking about thinking (metacognition). God commands us to reflect about something carefully so one may not jump to conclusions without critical insight. *Say: Journey through the earth; then, look on how He began the creation. Again, God will cause the last growth to grow. Truly, God is Powerful over everything.* (29:20)

God directs the attention of people to think by saying: Say to them. An example of the hundreds of 'Say" signs: *Say: I admonish you in but one thing: That you stand up for God by twos and one by one. Again, reflect. There is not in your companion any madness. He is only a warner to you of a severe punishment in advance of you.* (34:46)

The Quran gives narratives of the past so that the people may think and reflect over them.

God tells us that the objective of so many stories which have been mentioned in various chapters is to motivate humanity to think and reflect in order to get lessons and to seek wisdom. *If We willed, We would have exalted him with them, but he inclined towards the earth, and followed his own desires. And his parable is like the parable of a dog. If you will attack it, it pants. Or if you will leave it, it pants. That is the parable of the folk, those who denied Our signs. Then, relate these narratives so that perhaps they will reflect.* (7:176)

In the field of *tawhid* and to direct human being's attention to the creator: *Truly, in the creation of the heavens and of the earth and the alteration of nighttime and daytime there are signs for those imbued with intuition, those who remember God while upright and sitting and on their sides and they re-*

flect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: Our Lord! You had not created this in vain. Glory be to You! Then, protect us from the punishment of the fire. (3:191-3:192)

To reflect upon the signs in the Quran: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* (38:29)

QURANIC CHAPTER 17: THE JOURNEY BY NIGHT (AL-ISRA)

SIGNS 17:71-17:77

Makkah: *On a Day when We will call to every clan with their leader, then, whoever was given his book in his right hand, those will recite their book and they will not be wronged in the least.* (17:71)

And whoever had been unwilling to see here, will be unseeing in the world to come and one who goes astray from the way. (17:72)

Madinah (17:73)
Madinah (17:74)
Madinah (17:75)
Madinah (17:76)
Madinah (17:77)

COMMENTARY°

WHY PEOPLE REJECT THE DIVINE MESSAGE

This is a scene showing all creatures gathered together. (17: 71-17:72) Every group is called by the doctrine it followed in this life, or the messenger in whom it believed, or the leader it followed in this first life. It is called to be handed the record of its actions and the result that determines its reward in the life to come. Whoever is given his record in his right hand will be full of joy, reading through his record and looking carefully at its details. Such people are given their reward in full. Nothing is denied them, even though it may be no larger than a hair's breadth. On the other hand, a person who chooses in this life to remain blind to all indications of guidance will be also blind to the way of goodness in the life to come. They will be even far more astray. The outcome they will suffer is well known.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 17:71-17:72

WHO IS GOD?

On that Day, God will call every clan to their leader. Those whose books are given to them in their right hand will not be wronged in the least. Those who were unwilling to see here will be unseeing in the world to come because

they have gone astray.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quran states that every clan will call to its leader on that Day. Who will not be wronged on that Day? Those who are given their book in their right hand. Those who are given their book in their right hand are those who followed God's guidance. Receiving one's book in one's right hand is a sign of those who have inherited the garden. The consequences of our actions and intentions in this world will result in either reward or punishment in the next. That that Day will come.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I know that I cannot interpret information without ideas or concepts, or some way to give meaning.
I am able to find the key idea, the central concept of the signs.
I know the subject of the concept and its vocabulary.
I know that I think within a vocabulary.
I use these vocabulary terms because they are powerful tools for thinking.

LESSON 50(9). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PREPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED

What is an assumption? An assumptions is a conjecture, a guess, an opinion, a premise, a hypothesis of a thing that is accepted as true or as certain to happen, without proof. All human thought and action or experiences are based on assumptions. The thought process needs them in order to be able to move forward. The key is for students to be aware of them.

In understanding your own assumptions as you try to exercise Quranic thinking, you begin to realize that you can't figure out everything simultaneously. You have to make assumptions to figure something out. It is not possible to have many unanswered questions at the same time. The mind must make assumptions as it works to problem solve. It must take something for granted. You know that you can always question assumptions as you move forward in your thought process. At the same time, you should think about the assumptions that you are making. You should try to make them with some awareness by asking yourself: Do they make sense? You are in a better position to evaluate any reasoning or behavior when all of the elements of that reasoning or behavior are made explicit. You base both your reasoning and your behavior on beliefs you take for granted. You are often unaware of these assumptions. It is only by recognizing them that you can evaluate them.

Quranic thinkers have a passion for truth and for accepting the strongest reasoning. Thus, they have the intellectual courage to seek out and reject false assumptions of others. They realize that everyone makes some questionable assumptions. They are willing to question, and have others question, even their own most cherished assumptions. They consider alternative assumptions. They base their acceptance or rejection of assumptions on their rational scrutiny of them. They hold questionable assumptions with an appropriate degree of tentativeness. Independent thinkers evaluate assumptions for themselves, and do not simply accept the assumptions of others, even those assumptions made by everyone they know.

QURANIC EXAMPLES OF ASSUMPTIONS

When students study Quranic concepts, there is something that they find in the signs that refer to assumptions people make. For example: *Assumes he that none has power over him? He says: I have caused abundant wealth to perish. Assumes he that none sees him? Make we not two eyes for him and a tongue and two lips and guided him to the two open highways? Yet he rushed not onto the steep ascent. What will cause you to recognize what the steep ascent is? It is the liberating of a bondsperson or feeding on a day possessing famine an orphan, possessor of kinship, or a needy, possessor of misery. Again, it had been among those who believed and counseled one another to having patience and counseled one another to clemency.* (90:5-90:17)

Much of what is wrong with human thought can be found in the uncritical or unexamined assumptions that underlie it. For example, students often experience the world in such a way as to assume that they are observing things just as they are, as though they were seeing the world without the filter of a point of view. People they disagree with, of course, they recognize as having a point of view. *Say: Shall We tell you who will be ones who are losers by their actions? It is those whose endeavoring went astray in this present life while they assume that they are doing good by their handiwork.* (18:103-18:104)

One of the key dispositions of critical thinking is the on-going sense that as humans students always think within a perspective, that they virtually never experience things totally and absolutely. There is a connection therefore between thinking so as to be aware of their assumptions and being intellectually humble. Assumed humanity that they will be left because they say: *We believed and they will not be tried?* (29:2)

All reasoning must begin somewhere, must take some things for granted. Any 'defect' in the assumptions or presuppositions with which the reasoning begins is a possible source of problems. Assessing skills of reasoning involves assessing the ability to recognize and articulate their assumptions, again according to the relevant standards: *Assumed those who sought to do evil deeds that We will make them equal with those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality? Are their living and dying equal? How evil is the judgment they give!* (45:21)

A Quranic thinker's assumptions may be stated clearly or unclearly; the assumptions may be justifiable or unjustifiable, crucial or extraneous, consistent or contradictory. The feedback students receive from teachers on their ability to meet the relevant standards will be a large factor in the improvement of the Quranic student reasoning. *Or assumed you that you would enter the Garden while God knows not those who struggled among you and knows the ones who remain steadfast?* (3:142)

Assumptions usually operate at the subconscious or unconscious level of thought. Assumptions should be justified by sound evidence. *Assumes the human being that We will never gather his bones? Yea! We are ones who have power to shape his fingers again. Nay! The human being wants to act immorally in front of him. He asks: When is this Day of Resurrection? But when their sight will be astonished and the moon will cause the earth to be swallowed and the sun and the moon will be gathered, the human being will say on that Day: Where is a place to run away to?* (75:3-75:10)]

Assume they that We hear not their secret thoughts and their conspiring secretly? Yea! Our messengers are near them writing down. (43:80)

QURANIC CHAPTER 17: THE JOURNEY BY NIGHT (AL-ISRA)
SIGNS 17:78-17:84

Madinah (17:78)
Madinah (17:79)
Madinah (17:80)
Makkah: *And say: The Truth drew near*
and falsehood is vanishing!
Truly, falsehood had been made to vanish away. (17:81)
We send down in the Quran what is a healing and a mercy
for the ones who believe.
And it increases not the ones who are unjust,
but in a loss. (17:82)
And when We were gracious to the human being, he turned aside
and withdrew aside.
And when worse afflicted him, he had been hopeless. (17:83)
Say: Each does according to his same manner.
And your Lord is greater in knowledge of him
who is better guided on the way. (17:84)

COMMENTARY°

And say: The Truth drew near and falsehood is vanishing! (17:81) With irrefutable authority derived from God Himself it is proclaimed that truth has come to be established with its overpowering might, while falsehood is totally defeated. For it is in the nature of truth to triumph and establish itself with vigor, while it is in the nature of falsehood to wither away and be vanquished. (17:81) This is a basic truth that is stated here with emphasis. It may appear sometimes that falsehood is equipped with power and influence, but this is all hollow.

Truly, falsehood had been made to vanish away. (17:81) Falsehood may have all the might of Satan and those tyrannical forces which command power behind it, but God's promise will definitely come true and His power is far superior. Every believer who is firm of faith is certain to experience the truth of this promise.

THE QURANIC CURE

We send down in the Quran what is a healing and a mercy for the ones who believe. And it increases not the ones who are unjust, but in a loss. (17:82) There is certainly a cure and a blessing for those whose hearts are full of faith.

In the Quran we have a cure from carnal desires, greed, envy

and evil thoughts. All these cause sickness of the heart and mind, leading to debility and utter ruin. As the Quran cures these, it is a tool of grace bestowed by God on those who truly believe in Him.

The Quran also provides a cure from deviant thoughts and feelings. It protects the mind from going far astray, while allowing it complete freedom within its fruitful pursuits. It stops the mind from wasting its energy over what is devoid of use. It lays down for it a sound approach that ensures good and useful results. The same principle applies to the human body, ensuring that its resources are utilized for what is useful and fruitful, steering human beings away from the suppression of natural desires or indulgence without restraint. Thus it ensures a healthy body. In this again we see that the Quran is a means of God's grace that is bestowed on believers.

There is also in the Quran a cure for social ailments that weaken the structure of society and destroy its peace and security. Under the social system established by the Quran society enjoys perfect justice in peace and security. This is again a further aspect of grace bestowed through the Quran.

However, the Quran *increases not the ones who are unjust, but in a loss.* (17:82) They make no use of the cure it provides or the blessings it brings about. They look with dismay at the believers as they feel proud to be among the followers of the Quran.

When we are left to our own devices, without the cure and blessing of the Quran, and without consistent restraint of our whims and desires, we move between two extremes: when we enjoy good fortune, we may be arrogant and ungrateful, and when we experience hardship we are given to despair. *And when We were gracious to the human being, he turned aside and withdrew aside. And when worse afflicted him, he had been hopeless.* (17:83)

The chapter then states that everyone and every camp acts according to the path it follows. The final verdict on methods and actions is left to God alone: *Say: Each does according to his same manner. And your Lord is greater in knowledge of him who is better guided on the way.* (17:84) In this statement we have an implicit warning as to the results of approaches and deeds. Therefore, everyone needs to heed the warnings and strive to follow the path of divine guidance which is available to all.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 17:81-17:84

WHO IS GOD?

God is greater in knowledge of who is better guided on the way.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

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1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
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5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

According to God's message, God is greater in knowledge of him who is better guided on the way. Who is greater in knowledge of him who is better guided on the way? God is greater in knowledge of this. God who is the Originator of creation has greater knowledge of who among us is better guided. God is greater in knowledge. It is God who will judge us as He is greater in knowledge. God is greater in knowledge.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I frequently evaluated my listening.
I actively listening for main points.
I was able to summarize what my instructor said in my own words.
I was able to elaborate what is meant by key terms.
I learned to frequently evaluate my reading.
I am trying to read the Quranic text actively.
I am asking questions as I read.
I am learning to distinguish what I understand from what I don't.

LESSON 50(10). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY GENERATING IMPLICATIONS, CONSEQUENCES

WHAT ARE IMPLICATIONS?

Implications follow from our thoughts.

WHAT ARE CONSEQUENCES?

Consequences follow from our actions.

REASONING WELL

The ability to reason well is measured in part by an ability to understand and enunciate the implications and, then, the consequences of the reasoning. For example: I think this or that. What does this thought imply? What would be the consequences if I were to act upon that thought?

IMPLICATIONS IN REASONING

When you spell out the implications of your reasoning:

Have you succeeded in identifying significant and realistic implications?
Have you confined yourselves to unimportant and unrealistic ones?
Have you enunciated the implications of your views clearly and precisely enough to permit your thinking to be evaluated by the validity of those implications?
Can you trace the implications and consequences that comes from your reasoning?

QURANIC CHAPTER 17: THE JOURNEY BY NIGHT (AL-ISRA)

SIGNS 17:85-17:93

Makkah: *Say: The spirit is of the command of my Lord.*
And you were not given the knowledge but a little. (17:85)
And if We willed, We would, certainly, take away what We revealed to ***you****.*
Again, ***you*** *would not find for* ***you*** *in that any trustee against Us,* (17:86)
but a mercy from ***your*** *Lord.*
Truly, His grace had been great upon ***you****.* (17:87)
Say: If humankind were gathered together and jinn to bring the like of this Quran,
they would not approach the like of it

even if some of them had been sustainers of some others. (17:88)
And, certainly, We diversified for humanity in this, the Quran,
every kind of parable,
but most of humanity refused all but disbelief. (17:89)
And they would say: We will never believe in ***you***
until ***you*** *have a fountain gush out of the earth for us.* (17:90)
Or will there be a garden for ***you*** *of date palms and grapevines*
and ***You*** *have caused rivers to gush forth in its midst*
with a gushing forth? (17:91)
Or have ***you*** *caused heaven to drop on us*
in pieces as ***you*** *had claimed?*
Or have ***you*** *brought God and the angels as a warranty?* (17:92)
Or is there a house of ornament for ***you****?*
Or have ***you*** *ascended up into heaven?*
And we will not believe in ***your*** *ascension until* ***you*** *have sent down*
for us a Book that we recite.
Say: Glory be to my Lord!
Had I been but a mortal Messenger? (17:93)

COMMENTARY°

OUR SCANTY KNOWLEDGE

At this point the chapter mentions how some ungrateful questioned the Prophet about the spirit and its nature. The consistent approach of the Quran, which is indeed the best approach, is to answer people when they ask about matters that they need to know about and to give them answers that their faculties can understand and learn. It does not waste the intellectual faculties God has given them in pursuits that are of no use to them. Nor does it carry them over domains which they cannot comprehend. Therefore, when they asked about the spirit and its nature, the Prophet was instructed to tell them that such knowledge belonged to God alone. None other than Him has such knowledge. (17:85)

We know nothing of the spirit except the information God has given us in the revelations He has bestowed from on high. This information provides knowledge that is certain, beyond doubt. It comes from the One who knows everything. Had it been His will, He would have deprived humanity of such knowledge, taking away what He revealed to His Messenger. But He does not do so as an act of grace: (17: 86-17:87)

Just as the spirit is one of the secrets that God keeps to Himself, the Quran is God's book that human beings cannot emulate. Indeed, neither human beings nor jinn, representing the visible and invisible types of creation, can produce anything similar to the Quran, even if

they were to muster all their powers in a single effort to achieve this task: (17:88)

ONLY A HUMAN BEING AND A MESSENGER

Indeed We have explained to humanity, in this Quran, every kind of lesson. Yet most people refuse to accept anything other than disbelief: (17:89-17:93)

Their limited perception has failed to appreciate the inimitability of the Quran. Therefore they started asking for material miracles, enlisting absurd requests that only betrayed their childish thinking. Or they spoke with impudence about God Himself. They did not benefit by the expounding of cases and examples in the Quran, nor were they satisfied with the wide variety of styles and approaches the Quran employed in explaining its concepts, so as to be understood by people of different standards and faculties. Therefore, *most of humanity refused all but disbelief.*(17:89) They started to place conditions which they required to be met so that they might believe in the Prophet's message. *And they would say: We will never believe in you until you have a fountain gush out of the earth for us* (17:90) Alternatively, they told him that they would not believe in him until there *will there be a garden for you of date palms and grapevines and You have caused rivers to gush forth in its midst with a gushing forth?* (17:91)

But producing a miracle was something that the Prophet could not accomplish. Miracles are only determined by God in His wisdom. It is not appropriate for the Prophet to request such a miracle, unless God wishes to give it to him. The Prophet's understanding and appreciation of God's wisdom prevented him from requesting such a miracle. Therefore, he is commanded to say in reply to them: (17:93) He confines himself to the limits of his human status and he works according to the duties outlined for him in his message. He does not suggest to God anything beyond this.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 17:85-17:93

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quranic message tells the Prophet to say: The spirit is of the command of my Lord. God's grace is great upon you, Muhammad. Say: If humankind were gathered together and jinn to bring the like of this Quran, they would not be able to do so. Say: Glory be to my Lord! I am not but a mortal Messenger.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

You have only been give a little knowledge about the spirit. Every kind of parable has been diversified for humanity, but most continue to deny the signs. The ungrateful say: We will not believe in you, Muhammad, until you have a fountain gush out for the earth for us. Or will there be a garden of date

palms and grapevines and rivers gushing forth? Or have you, Muhammad, caused heaven to drop on us? Or have you, Muhammad, brought God and the angels as a warranty? Or is there a house of ornament for you, Muhammad? Or have you, Muhammad ascended to heaven? We will not believe in your ascension, Muhammad, until you have sent down for us a Book that we recite.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
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5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message here states that: The spirit is of the command of God. What is the spirit? The spirit is of the command of God. We are given only a little knowledge of the spirit. The spirit is from the command of God. We know very little about the spirit. God has told us very little about the spirit other than that it is the command of God.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

Ask yourself:

Do you talk about what you have not yet done?
Why do you do so?
What evidence do you have?

LESSON 50(11). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT BELIEF IN ONE GOD (*TAWHID*)

The greatest emphasis in the Quran is on the Oneness or Unity of God (*tawhid*, monotheism) which implies belief that God is One. He created the universe and all that is in it and that at every moment there is a new creation. *Were We wearied by the first creation? No! They are perplexed about a new creation.* (50:15) He created moral order among us where we are judged according to the merit of our deeds: *Whoever does the weight of an atom of good will see it. Whoever does the weight of an atom of the worst will see it.* (99:7-99:8)

We are not judged arbitrarily: *Know that God will never be One Who Causes to Change a divine blessing when He was gracious to a folk unless they first change what is within themselves. And, truly, God is Hearing, Knowing.* (8:53)

This moral order works without any favor, not only in the case of individuals, but also in the case of societies and peoples: *Mention when Moses said to his folk: O my folk! Remember the divine blessing of God on you when He assigned Prophets among you and assigned kings and gives you what He gave not to anyone of the worlds.* (5:20)

God has entered into covenant with human beings within the limits of this moral order with people as such and not with particular nations or races: *O those who believed! Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God and let not that you hate a folk drive you into not dealing justly. Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness (taqwa). Be God-conscious of God. Truly, God is Aware of what you do.* (5:8)

Reason: First of all, our proof of our belief ultimately depends upon our ability to reason. Without reason, we would not be able to understand the Quranic signs nor respond to their message. The connection between faith and reason is the key to our Quranic critical thinking. It is through this connection that our thoughts and emotions grow into a harmony with each other. The Quran repeatedly asks us to think about the signs of God in the universe and within ourselves, to understand God's presence within us and in the universe, and ultimately to find the truth. The concept of the Quranic signs seeks creates a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those who have intuition recollect.* (38:29)

Good deeds: Proof that we believe in the One God (unity) is through competing with one another in good deeds, (3:114; 23:61) *Do good. Truly God loves the ones who are doers of good.* (2:195) *And among the good deeds is to obey God and to obey the Messenger.* (5:92) Note that 5:92 commands us to obey God and to obey the Messenger. It does not say: obey God and obey Muhammad.

QURANIC CHAPTER 17: THE JOURNEY BY NIGHT (AL-ISRA)
SIGNS 17:94-17:100

Makkah: *And nothing prevented humanity*
from believing
when the guidance drew near them,
but that they said:
Raised God up a mortal as a Messenger? (17:94)
Say: If there had been angels on earth walking around, ones who
are at peace, then, We would certainly have sent down for them
from heaven an angel as a Messenger. (17:95)
Say: God sufficed as a Witness between me and between you.
Truly, He had been of His servants Aware, Seeing. (17:96)
And he whom God guides is one who is truly guided. And
whomever He causes to go astray,
you will never find for them protectors other than Him.
And We will assemble them on the Day of Resurrection
on their faces, unseeing and unspeaking and unhearing.
Their place of shelter will be hell.
Whenever it declined, We will increase the blaze for them. (17:97)
That is their recompense
because they were ungrateful for Our signs.
And they said: When we had been bones and broken bits,
will we be ones who are raised up as a new creation? (17:98)
Consider they not God Who created the heavens and the earth
is One Who Has Power to create the like of them?
And He assigned a term for them whereof there is no doubt in it,
but the ones who are unjust refused all but disbelief. (17:99)
Say: If you possessed the treasures of the mercy of my Lord,
then, you would hold back for dread of spending.
And the human being had been ever stingy. (17:100)

COMMENTARY°

Before the Prophet Muhammad was sent as God's Messenger, and even after he began to preach his message, people took satisfaction in the misconception that a human being could be God's messenger. Therefore, they rejected God's messengers and the messages He revealed to them: *And nothing prevented humanity from believing when the guidance drew near them, but that they said: Raised God up a mortal as a Messenger?* (17:94). In this way they turned away from divine guidance.

Say: If there had been angels on earth walking around, ones who

are at peace, then, We would certainly have sent down for them from heaven an angel as a Messenger. (17:95) Had God willed that angels should inhabit the earth, He would have made them in the form of human beings, because it is the form that suits the laws of nature affecting the earth. He says in another sign, *And if We made him an angel, certainly, We would have made him as a man.* (6:9)

Since this is the pattern God has chosen for His creation, He instructs His Messenger to end all argument with them and leave the dispute between the two parties to God. He calls on God to be his witness, leaving them entirely to God to do with whatever He pleases. He is the One who knows everything about everyone. *Say: God sufficed as a Witness between me and between you. Truly, He had been of His servants Aware, Seeing.* (17:96) This statement carries an implicit warning. The results, however, are painted in a frightening scene of what will happen on the Day of Judgement.

DEVOID OF ALL FACULTIES

We find those who deserve to be left in error are so because they turn away from God's revelations and blind themselves to all signs pointing the way to His guidance. (17: 97-17:99) Such people will have no one to protect them against God's punishment: ***You*** *will never find for them protectors other than Him.* (17:97) On the Day of Judgment they shall suffer humiliation and will be resurrected in a terrible situation, *on the Day of Resurrection on their faces*, lost as they will be *unseeing and unspeaking and unhearing.* (17:97) They are thus deprived of their senses by which they might have been able to find their way through the great multitude. It is a fitting result, because it was they who chose not to use their senses in life to follow the signs of divine guidance. The final outcome is that "Hell shall be their abode." It will be made to continue to burn fiercely: *Whenever it declined, We will increase the blaze for them.*(17:97)

It is certainly a horrifying end, but they have earned it through their disbelief in God's signs and revelations, and also through their denial of resurrection, the reckoning and reward: *That is their recompense because they were ungrateful for Our signs. And they said: When we had been bones and broken bits, will we be ones who are raised up as a new creation?* (17:98)

This is followed by a new argument based on what they see in real life but tend to ignore: *Consider they not God Who created the heavens and the earth is One Who Has Power to create the like of them?* (17:99) Why should the concept of resurrection be difficult to accept when simple logic confirms that God who has created this majestic universe is able to create a similar one? If He is thus able to

create, He is also able to bring creatures back to life after they have died. *And He assigned a term for them whereof there is no doubt in it.* (17:99) He has allowed them a term of life and set a time for their resurrection. However, *the ones who are unjust refused all but disbelief.* (17:99) Therefore, their punishment will be fair, as they have had all signs, pointers and evidence to show them the path of guidance, but they refused to follow anything except error and unbelief.

A THREAT TO EXTERMINATE THE BELIEVERS

Yet those who made such suggestions and demands as related in the chapter were themselves misers. Had they been in charge of God's grace, they would have held on to it, fearing to expend it. *Say: If you possessed the treasures of the mercy of my Lord, then, you would hold back for dread of spending. And the human being had been ever stingy.* (17:100) This is an image of utter stinginess, because God's grace encompasses everything. It will never be exhausted or diminished. Yet in their miserly attitude, they would have withheld God's grace from His creation, had they been placed in charge of administering it.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 17:94-17:100

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quranic message tells the Prophet to say: If there had been angels on the earth walking around, God would have sent down for the ungrateful an angel as a Messenger. God sufficed as a Witness between me and between you, the ungrateful. You, Muhammad, will never find for them protectors other than Him. Do those who deny the Day not consider that God Who created the heavens and the earth is One Who Has Power to create the like of them? Say: If you, the ungrateful, possessed the treasures of the mercy of my Lord, then you would hold back for dread of spending as the human being is every stingy.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The ungrateful ask: Did God raise up a moral as a Messenger? They ask: When we are bones and broken bits, will we be raised up in a new creation?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message: God sends human beings as Messengers. Can a human being be a Messenger of God? God raised up a mortal as a Messenger. Many previous Messengers were also human beings like Abraham, Moses, Joseph and Jacob. God can choose to send human Messengers. Muhammad is a human being and a Messenger of God. God sends human beings as Messengers.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I realized that I sometimes think with a bias in favor of myself.
I realized I sometimes become irritable over small things.
I realized that I have sometimes said something 'irrational' to get my way.
I realized I have sometimes tried to impose my will upon others.
I remembered I have sometimes failed to speak my mind when I felt strongly about something and then later felt resentment.

LESSON 50(12). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (*TAQWA*)

The Quran is revealed to produce this attitude of God-consciousness among people: *an Arabic Recitation without any crookedness so that perhaps they would be God-conscious.* (39:28) It is the presence of this moral attitude which saves people from destruction (27:53; 41:18) and it is this which helps them maintain God's commands in their conjugal life, (2:24; 4:129) in sacrifice, (5:30; 22:37) in different aspects of social life, (2:177) and in fulfilling faithfully their social obligations. (25:63-25:74)

To be God-conscious (*muttaqi*) (to guard against evil) is to exhibit virtuous conduct: *It is not virtuous conduct that you turn your faces towards the East or the West. Rather virtuous conduct consists of: Whoever believes in God and the Last Day, and the angels, and the Book, and the Prophets. Proof of belief in the One God is in one's actions, behavior or practicing of this belief which includes, among other practices: The practice of good deeds: to spend out of one's substance, out of love for God, for kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, for the ransom of prisoners-of-war; to be steadfast in prayers, and to pay the purifying alms* (zakat)*; to fulfill the contracts which have been made; and to be firm and patient in pain (or suffering), adversity, and times of danger. Such people as follow these are possessed of true God-consciousness.* (2:177-2:178)

The better and more lasting reward of the Lord is for those who believe and put their trust in Him; those who avoid the greater crimes and shameful deeds, and, even when they are angry, they forgive; those who hearken to their Lord, and establish regular prayer; who conduct their affairs by mutual consultation; who spend out of what God bestows on them for sustenance; who, when an oppressive wrong is inflicted on them, (are not cowed but) help and defend themselves; and those who recompense injury with injury in degree equal thereto and, better still, forgive and make reconciliation. But indeed if any do help and defend themselves after a wrong is done to them, against such there is no cause of blame. The blame is only against those who oppress people with wrongdoing and insolently transgress beyond bounds through the land, defying right and justice; for such there will be a grievous penalty. But indeed showing patience and forgiveness is an exercise of courageous will and resolution in the conduct of affairs. God-consciousness results in developing a sense of humility.

QURANIC CHAPTER 17: THE JOURNEY BY NIGHT (AL-ISRA)

SIGNS 17:101-17:111

Makkah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (17:101)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (17:102)

Makkah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (17:103)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (17:104)
Makkah: *And We caused it to descend with The Truth.*
And it came down with The Truth.
And We sent it not to ***you,***
but as one who gives good tidings and as a warner. (17:105)
And it is a Recitation.
We separated it in order that ***you*** *recite it*
to humanity at intervals.
And We sent it down a sending successively down. (17:106)
Say: Believe in it, or believe not.
Truly, those who were given the knowledge before it,
when it is recounted to them, they fall down on their visages,
ones who prostrate.(17:107)
And they say: Glory be to our Lord!
Truly, the promise of our Lord
had been one that is accomplished. (17:108)
And they fall down on their visage weeping.
And it increases them in humility. (17:109)
Say: Call to God or call to the Merciful.
By whatever you call Him, to Him are the Fairer Names.
And be ***you*** *not loud in* ***your*** *formal prayer*
nor speak in a low tone. Look for a way between. (17:110)
And say: The Praise belongs to God
Who takes not a son to Himself
and there be no associates ascribed with Him
in the dominion
nor there be for Him need for a protector out of humility.
And magnify Him a magnification! (17:111)

COMMENTARY°

The Quran was revealed in order to educate a community and establish for it a system and code of life. This community would then carry it to all the corners of the earth in order to educate humanity on the basis of this perfect system. Hence the Quran was revealed one part at a time, according to the practical needs of that community and the circumstances attending its first formative period. Education and the molding of a nation and a community require time as well as practical experience. Thus the Quran was not revealed as a theoretical doctrine or an abstract vision to be used for academic study and polemical argument. It was revealed part by part instead so that it could be implemented gradually during this formative period. This is indeed the reason for its gradual revelation, one part or passage at

a time, not a whole scripture or code given at the outset.

The first generation of believers received it in this light. They approached it as directives to be implemented in practice, be they prohibitions, recommendations or obligations. They never approached it as something for moral or intellectual debate like poetry and literature, or for amusement like legends and stories. They allowed it to influence their daily lives to the full, bringing their feelings, perceptions and behavior in line with it, and molding their way of life in accordance with its teachings. They discarded whatever was in conflict with it of their values, norms and practices.

TO BELIEVE OR NOT TO BELIEVE

At this point the Prophet is commanded to explain the truth plainly to his people, leaving them free to make their choice to either believe in the Quran or to reject it. They will have to bear the consequences of their choice. (17:107-17:109)

This is an inspiring image showing people endowed with knowledge listening to the Quran, touched by its truth and falling down on their faces in humble prostration. They cannot restrain themselves. They do not merely prostrate themselves, but fall down on their faces in complete humility. They give expression to what they feel in their hearts of God's greatness and the fulfilment of His promise: (17:108) But then their feelings are further enhanced and they are deeply touched so that words are insufficient to express their feelings. Tears pour down from their eyes telling of their profound emotion: (17:109) It is a scene of profound feelings demonstrated by people receiving the Quran with open hearts, having learned from their earlier scriptures of the truth it explains.

This inspiring scene is painted after the chapter has given the Arabs the choice of believing in the Quran or rejecting it. It is followed with a statement leaving it up to them to call on God with whatever names they choose. (17:110)

The Prophet is then instructed to recite his prayers in a middle voice. This is because the unbelievers used to ridicule him whenever they saw him praying. It is also true to say that a voice pitched in the middle is the most suited to prayer: (17:110)

The chapter closes in the same way as it opened, praising God and asserting His oneness, and reiterating the facts that He has neither son nor partner and is in need of no help or support from anyone. This is indeed the pivot round which the chapter turns: (17:111)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 17:105-17:111

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

God tells the Prophet that the Quran was sent down with The Truth so that he would warn the people. He sent it down for him to recite it in intervals. Those who believe, prostrate themselves when they hear it and say: Glory be to our Lord. It increases them in humility. God did not take a son to Himself nor did He have any associates in the creation. Magnify God a magnification. ?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I frequently evaluated my listening.
I actively listening for main points.
I was able to summarize what my instructor said in my own words.
I was able to elaborate what is meant by key terms.
I learned to frequently evaluate my reading.
I am trying to read the Quranic text actively.
I am asking questions as I read.
I am learning to distinguish what I understand from what I don't.

LESSON 51(1). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT

VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE

Virtuous conduct, integrity or moral uprightness, the state of being whole and undivided or a sense of inner and outer unity develops through moral discipline. It produces the attitude of God-consciousness (*taqwa*) when the discipline of prayer, fasting, giving the purifying alms, and pilgrimage is practiced. People are commanded to guard strictly their habit of formal prayers and stand before God in a devout frame of mind, (2:238) to pay the purifying alms, (98:5) to spend in charity secretly and openly (25:29)—a beautiful loan to God (72:20)—a bargain that will never fail, (25:29) involving a glad tidings for the believers (22:34) and a cause of prosperity (31:5) and spiritual joy. (20:139) Those people who follow these principles are on the right path towards the moral trait of integrity under the true guidance of the Lord. (31:5; 97:5) They remove the stain of evil from the people (11:114) and help them refrain from shameful and unjust deeds. (29:45) It is the practice of all believing people that when God grants them power in the land, they enjoin the right and forbid the wrong.

QURANIC CHAPTER 10: JONAH (YUNUS)
SIGNS 10:1-10:10

Makkah: *Alif Lam Ra.* (10:1)
These are the signs of the wise Book.
Had it been for humanity to wonder
that We revealed to a man from among them that:
Warn humanity and give you good tidings
to those who believed so that they will have
an indisputable footing with their Lord?
The ones who are ungrateful said:
Truly, this is one who is a clear sorcerer. (10:2)
Truly, your Lord is God Who created
the heavens and the earth in six days.
Again, He turned Himself to the Throne
managing the command.
There is no intercessor but after His permission.
That is God, your Lord, so worship Him alone.
Will you not, then, recollect? (10:3)
To Him is your return, altogether.
The promise of God is true.
It is He Who begins the creation.
Again, He will cause it to return
so that He may give equitable recompense
to those who believed

and did as the ones in accord with morality.
And those who are ungrateful,
for them is a drink of scalding water
and a painful punishment
because they had been ungrateful. (10:4)
It is He Who made the sun an illumination
and the moon as a light
and ordained its mansions
so that you would know the number of the years
and the reckoning.
God created that only in Truth.
He explains distinctly the signs for a folk who know. (10:5)
Truly, in the alternation of the nighttime and the daytime
and whatever God has created in the heavens
and the earth are signs
for a folk who are God-conscious. (10:6)
Truly, those who hope not for their meeting with Us,
but were well-pleased with this present life
and were secured in it,
those are they, ones who are heedless of Our signs. (10:7)
Those, their place of shelter will be the fire
because of what they had been earning. (10:8)
Truly, those who believed
and did as the ones in accord with morality,
their Lord will guide them in their belief.
Rivers will run beneath them in Gardens of Bliss. (10:9)
They will be calling out from there:
*Glory be to **You**, O God!*
And their greetings in it will be: Peace!
And the last of their calling out will be that:
The Praise belongs to God the Lord of the worlds! (10:10)

Commentary°

Alif Lam Ra

This first section (*ruku*) gives the example of how we receive God's grace and how we react when we are faced with hardship or disaster. The signs are full of life where examples of us boarding ships and traveling upon the sea before we face a raging storm that brings us into contact with high waves from every direction. They also describe another scene showing how quickly this life passes for each one of us. It takes just an instant for all its glitter to disappear while we are being impressed with its brightness, unaware as we are of the coming doom. At the same time, God calls on us to seek a life

of peace and security in order to be reassured of a life that does not end quickly and suddenly, but lasts forever. Each one of the signs of the Quran has a specific purpose as (10:24) says: *We explain distinctly the signs for a folk who reflect.* It is those of us who reflect on God's wisdom in the creation and the way that He conducts and regulates all of creation.

These are the signs of the wise Book. (10:1) It is truly a wise Book that addresses us with what suits our human nature. Some aspects that are always true of human nature are presented in this section reflected over every generation. It calls on those of us who are unaware to wake up and reflect on the signs that we see and experience all around us in the vast universe, in the heavens and the earth, in the sun and the moon, in the night and the day, in the fate of communities that have passed before us and how they responded to their Messengers. Everything points to the great power that manages, conducts and regulates all of life.

The Quran asks us a rhetorical question, a question that makes a point, but does not expect an answer. The Quranic question wonders at an attitude of ours that may consider the concept of revelation to be a strange one: *Had it been for humanity to wonder that We revealed to a man from among them that: Warn humanity and give you good tidings to those who believed so that they will have an indisputable footing with their Lord.* (10:2)

WHY A HUMAN MESSENGER

God's wisdom is clear in choosing to send the revelations to a human being from among themselves and one whom they knew well so that they could give and take with him without any difficulty or embarrassment. His wisdom in sending Messengers is even more clear. Each of us by our very nature can accept and follow good or evil. We distinguish between the two with our ability to reason. Our sense of reason needs to have an accurate criterion (*furqan*) to which it can refer whenever things become doubtful and unclear or whenever temptations or immediate desires affect our judgment. We need a measure that is totally unaffected by anything that influences our human body, mentally or in temperament in order to give us the right answer concerning any uncertainty. This criterion or measure is nothing other than God's guidance and His law.

This requires that our faith should give us a firm basis to which our mind can refer all its concepts and ideas in order to determine which of them are correct and which are false. To say, on the other hand, that our faith always reflects how we think about our faith (which may change and evolve) is to rely only on human logic and

concepts. This way of thinking undermines the whole basis and leaves no proper criterion to evaluate human concepts. In other words, we have to rely on criterion that are greater than our own individual self.

Although the question of revelation is so clear, the ungrateful among us see it as being very strange as the sign tells us: *Had it been for humanity to wonder that We revealed to a man from among them that: Warn humanity and give you good tidings to those who believed so that they will have an indisputable footing with their Lord.* (10:2)

The ungrateful say that Prophet Muhammad is an enchanter or a sorcerer because what he says is beyond the power of human beings. Yet they should acknowledge the fact of revelation because of just this: Sorcery is not capable of including statements about universal facts or of delivering a complete code of living, laws and moral principles that make for a highly civilized society. They tend to confuse revelations with sorcery because sorcery was always a part of pagan beliefs as part of the religion.

THE LORD TO BE WORSHIPPED

The Lord (*rabb*) Who deserves to be worshipped alone is the Creator of all that is: *Truly, your Lord is God Who created the heavens and the earth in six days.* (10:3) It is He Who created the heavens and the earth according to a plan of creation and to a wise purpose. He did this all in "six days." The "six days" are not necessarily to be understood in the literal sense. We may conclude that they are mentioned only to point to the wisdom behind the planning of creation and how the affairs of the universe are conducted so as to suit God's purpose. These "six days" belong to the realm that God has kept to Himself. We cannot determine what they are unless He chooses to inform us. Therefore, we do not go beyond the fact that they are stated in the Quran.

The expression: *Again, He turned Himself to the Throne managing the command* (10:3) indicates a position of an authority of a higher power. It gives a physical image in the style of the Quran. It uses the conjunction "again," but it does not indicate any chronological order. It only indicates a mental dimension. There is no sense of time in this context. There is simply no state or form that can be applied to God that came into existence after it was not there. God is not subject to an event taking place and all that events happening include "time" and "location."

He determines the beginning and the end, the shape and the form, the preliminaries and the conclusions, and chooses the laws that govern its stages and its final place: *There is no intercessor but*

after His permission. That is God, your Lord, so worship Him alone. Will you not, then, recollect? (10:3)

As has been said in regard to all universal phenomena pointing to God and His Lordship, the ungrateful do not necessarily deny the existence of God. They may acknowledge that He is the Creator who gives sustenance, initiates life, causes death, regulates all matters and is able to do whatever He wills. However, this acknowledgement, if given, is not followed by its logical consequence of acknowledging His Lordship over their lives. Acknowledging His Lordship over their lives would have to be reflected in submitting to Him alone in all matters, orienting all worship to Him and accepting His rule in all their affairs. This is precisely the meaning of: *That is God, your Lord, so worship Him alone. Will you not, then, recollect?* (10:3)

TRIBAL HONOR

Tribal honor, although not a period of history or a particular stage of development, may refer to the state of affairs that prevailed in Arabia in the period right about the first revelations first began to Prophet Muhammad. The root word contains the meaning of "ignorance." In the broader sense used in this commentary, it refers to any situation, social, political, economic, psychological that is not based on the belief in the Oneness of God implying that such a situation is generated by and based on a state of ignorance.

In tribal societies the meaning of the word "worship" is seriously curtailed. It becomes synonymous with "offering worship rituals." People with this mind-set think that once they address these rituals to God, they are worshipping God alone. The fact is that the term "worship" comes from the root *abada* that mans "submission." Worship rituals are only one aspect of submission.

To Him is your return, altogether. (10:4) The return is to God, not to the partners we may associate with God nor the intercessors we claim that we have. God has promised that we will return to Him and that His promise is certain to be fulfilled as resurrection is the completion of creation. *The promise of God is true. It is He Who begins the creation. Again, He will cause it to return so that He may give recompense to those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality with equity. And those who are ungrateful, for them is a drink of scalding water and a painful punishment because they had been ungrateful.* (10:4) Those of us who are ungrateful put aside the code of divine justice aside and, as a result, do not move to the way that leads to the attainment of human perfection. According to the laws of nature that never fail, such deviation keeps the ungrateful short of that level of perfection.

The Quran draws our attention to the elaborate design clearly seen in their creation: *It is He Who made the sun an illumination.* (10:5) We feel that it is almost ablaze. *And the moon as a light.* It shines and illuminates. *And ordained its mansions.* (10:5) It stands every night in a new position which gives it a corresponding shape. This is seen by all of us when we look at the moon, night after night. We do not need to have any specialized knowledge of astronomy to realize this. The purpose is clear: *So that you would know the number of the years and the reckoning* (10:5) Today, we all still calculate time on the basis of the sun and the moon's movements.

Is all this a pastime, a coincidence or something false? Certainly not. Such an elaborate system, providing such perfect harmony and accuracy which never fail, could not be without purpose. It is neither false nor a coincidence: *God created that only in Truth.* (10:5) The truth is its tool, substance and objective. The truth is constant and firmly rooted, and these phenomena which point to the truth are also clear, constant and permanent. *He explains distinctly the signs for a folk who know.* (10:5) Knowledge and learning are needed to understand the elaborate planning behind these magnificent scenes.

The heavens, the earth, the blazing sun, and the illuminating moon combine to produce the succession of day and night. This is a telling phenomenon which inspires anyone who opens his heart and mind to the messages contained in the universe: *Truly, in the alternation of the nighttime and the daytime and whatever God has created in the heavens and the earth are signs for a folk who are God-conscious.* (10:6) The Arabic term used for the 'alternating of night and day' (10:6) refers both to their succession and their varying length. Both are well-known aspects which lose their significance with familiarity, except in those moments when the human soul and conscience are awakened and he begins to contemplate the rise and setting of different stars and planets like a person reborn, responding to every aspect and every phenomenon. Only in such moments does a person truly live, shaking away the rust of familiarity and repetition which becloud his vision and blunt his responses.

The very existence of the universe and its meticulously accurate and harmonious systems remains a proof too strong for the ungrateful to face. Human nature, in heart, mind and soul, responds to this proof. The Quranic approach addresses human nature as a whole in the broadest and most direct way. *Those, their place of shelter will be the fire because of what they had been earning.* (10:8) This is a fitting end.

The believers by contrast realize that there is something much superior to this present life. Their deeds are God-conscious because

their faith motivates them to obey God's commands and expect His generous reward in the hereafter: *Truly, those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality, their Lord will guide them in their belief. Rivers will run beneath them in Gardens of Bliss.* (10:9) Having faith establishes a relationship between them and God who guides them to do what is right. As a result of this guidance, their hearts are alive, fully aware of the straight path they have to follow. Their conscience is alert, directing them always to do what is good and what earns God's pleasure. These are the ones who are admitted into heaven where: *Rivers will run beneath them in Gardens of Bliss.* (10:9) The reference here to running waters in heaven is at the same time a reference to water generally which is always associated with growth, fertility and life.

*What are their preoccupations once in heaven? What do they wish for? They have no need for wealth, position, or personal gain. They will be calling out from there: Glory be to **You**, O God!* (10:10) What God gives them is far better than any such concern which is in any case now behind them. Instead, their preoccupation, their top priority, is described as their 'appeal' or 'call' to glorify God in the beginning and praise Him in the end. In between times they greet one another and are greeted by the angels: *And their greetings in it will be: Peace! And the last of their calling out will be that: The Praise belongs to God the Lord of the worlds.* (10:10)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 10:1-10:10

WHO IS GOD?

God is the creator of the heavens and the earth in six days. God is your Lord so worship Him. To God is the return. He Who begins creation will cause it to return so that He can give equitable recompense to those who believed and did as ones in accord with morality. God explains the signs distinctly for ones who know.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

Warn humanity and give you, Muhammad, good tidings to those who believe that they will have an indisputable footing with their Lord.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

Will you not recollect that God is your Lord so worship Him. Humanity wonders why God sent a Messenger from among themselves. Those who are ungrateful said: Muhammad is a clear sorcerer. For the ungrateful there is a painful punishment. The place of those who were heedless of God's signs, there place will be the fire. For those who believed and did as ones in accord with morality, for them is the Gardens of Bliss. They will call out from there:

Glory be to You, O God. Their greeting will be: Peace. And their last calling out will be: The Praise belongs to God the Lord of the worlds.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

God revealed His message, the Quran, to a human being. What does a Messenger do? The Messenger is sent by God to warn and to give good tidings. Messengers were sent by God to warn humanity about the Day of Judgment and to give good tidings to those who believed in it that they will be have an eternal reward in the Gardens of Eden. Those who believe will be rewarded and those who do not heed the warning will be punished. To follow the guidance results in receiving good tidings. God sent the Messenger.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I focused on one moral trait each week and I was able to learn how to internalize them.

LESSON 51(2). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT EMPOWERING CONSTANCY, COURAGE

Constancy, change is firmness of purpose; resoluteness, resolve, willpower, strength of character, purposefulness, intentness and the ability to do something that frightens one. It is to show strength in the face of pain or grief.

QURANIC CHAPTER 10: JONAH (YUNUS)
SIGNS 10:11-10:20

Makkah: *And if God is to quicken*
the worst for humanity,
as they would desire to hasten for the good,
their term would be decided.
But We forsake those who hope not for the meeting with Us,
wandering unwilling to see in their defiance. (10:11)
And when harm afflicted the human being,
he calls to Us on his side or as one who sits at home
or as one who is standing up.
But when We removed his harm from him,
he passed by as if he had never been calling to Us
for harm that afflicted him.
Thus, made to appear pleasing to the ones who are excessive
is what they had been doing. (10:12)
And, certainly, We caused to perish generations
before you when they did wrong
while their Messengers drew near with the clear portents,
but they had not been such as to believe.
Thus, We give recompense to the folk, the ones who sin. (10:13)
Again, We made you vicegerents on the earth after them
that We look on how you would do. (10:14)
And when are recounted to them Our signs,
clear portents, those who hope not for their meeting with Us said:
Bring us a Recitation other than this or substitute it.
Say: It be not possible for me to substitute it of my own accord.
I follow nothing but what is revealed to me.
Truly, I fear if I rebelled against my Lord
a punishment on the tremendous Day. (10:15)
Say: If God willed, I would not have related it to you
nor would He have caused you to recognize it.
Surely, I lingered in expectation among you
a lifetime before this.
Will you not, then, be reasonable? (10:16)

So who did greater wrong than he who devised a lie against God
or denied His signs?
Truly, the ones who sin will not prosper. (10:17)
And they worship other than God things
that injure them not, nor profit them.
And they say: These are our intercessors with God.
Say: Are you telling God of what He knows not
in the heavens nor in and on the earth?
Glory be to Him
and exalted is He above partners they ascribe. (10:18)
And humanity had not been but one community,
but, then, they became at variance.
And if it were not for a Word that preceded from your Lord,
it would be decided between them immediately
about what they are at variance in it. (10:19)
And they say: Why was a sign not caused
to descend from his Lord?
Say: Truly, the unseen belongs only to God.
So wait awhile.
Truly, I am with you
of the ones who are waiting awhile. (10:20)

COMMENTARY°

THE CHANGING ATTITUDE OF HUMAN BEINGS

The Quran states: *We forsake those who hope not for the meeting with Us, wandering unwilling to see in their defiance.* (10:11) It says: *And if God is to quicken the worst for humanity, as they would desire to hasten for the good, their term would be decided.* (10:11) And, then, to those who turn to God when harm afflicts them, but is not grateful to God once the harm is removed and the signs that follow explain why: (10:12-110:4)

In connection to the challenge to hasten punishment, the Quran shows the situation of what happens when we suffer affliction. When the affliction is removed, some of us return to what caused the affliction in the first place: *And when harm afflicted the human being, he calls to Us on his side or as one who sits at home or as one who is standing up.* (10:12) All situations are included so that we have a feeling of how we stop when the energy we derive from good health, wealth or power is cut off. It is just like something moving that suddenly hits a wall. When the wall is removed, it moves along. Here we have the verb "passed by" describing a violent movement that leaves no time for reflection, learning or gratitude: *But when We removed his harm from him, he passed by as if he had never been call-*

ing to Us for harm that afflicted him. (10:12)

It is this kind of nature—remembering God when suffering an affliction, but not once it is removed—that makes those of us who exceed our limits that our excesses are only normal and fair. *Thus, made to appear pleasing to the ones who are excessive is what they had been doing.* (10:12)

It is only right that people should reflect on what happened in the past to those who were excessive in their lifestyle: *And, certainly, We caused to perish generations before you when they did wrong while their Messengers drew near with the clear portents, but they had not been such as to believe. Thus, We give recompense to the folk, the ones who sin.* (10:13) We go beyond the limits. This is another way of describing a disbelief in the Oneness of God and of our associating partners, including our ego, with God and how this leads to our ruin as it did with the Aad and the Thamud in the past.

Having been shown the fate of those who turned away from God's guidance after it had been explained to them by their Prophets and Messengers, those of us who are ungrateful are reminded that we are now their successors, having power in the land so that we can show ourselves to be worthy of God's trust: *Again, We made you viceregents on the earth after them.* (10:14)

Thus, the Quran shows us the facts as they so that we are not deceived by appearances. This creates in our heart an alertness based on consciousness and God-consciousness. This alertnesss works as a safety valve for both each individual self as well as for the community. When we realize that we are being tested in their life on earth and that everything we possess or enjoy during our lifetime is a part of this text, such realization give us immunity against being arrogant or deluded. We no longer seek abundance of enjoyment at any cost because we realize that we will have to account for what we enjoy. There is, then, in essence a constant feeling of being protected. This is clear in the Quranic statement: *We look on how you would do.* (10:14) This should make us extra careful and willing to do well and pass the test.

A DEMAND TO CHANGE THE QURAN

Once we have been made aware that we are the successors to earlier communities that refused God's guidance, this section then provides examples of the deeds of these past groups: (10:15-10:20)

This is the attitude of the ungrateful to Prophet Muhammad's message when they are given power in the land: *And when are recounted to them Our signs, clear portents, those who hope not for their meeting with Us said: Bring us a Recitation other than this or*

substitute it. (10:15) This is a strange request. It shows a lack of seriousness and a total ignorance of the role of the Quran in our lives and the reason for its revelation.

It may be that those of us who do not have any expectation of meeting God are trying to be too clever. We look on the issue as if it were a kind of literary challenge. All that Prophet Muhammad needs to do is to accept the challenge and compose a different discourse or to replace some parts of it. Here he receives clear instructions: *Say: It be not possible for me to substitute it of my own accord. I follow nothing but what is revealed to me. Truly, I fear if I rebelled against my Lord a punishment on the tremendous Day.* (10:15) The issue here is not one of competition or of demonstrating skills or of any literary talent. The Quran is a constitution outlining a complete code of living revealed by the One Who controls the whole universe. He is the One who has created us and knows what suits us best. The Prophet cannot alter it on his own initiative. He only conveys God's message and follows what is revealed to him. Any change in the Quran represents a very serious act of disobedience to God: *Say: If God willed, I would not have related it to you nor would He have caused you to recognize it. Surely, I lingered in expectation among you a lifetime before this. Will you not, then, be reasonable?* (10:16)

The Prophet is further instructed to make it clear that he would never have invented a lie and attributed it to God. Far be it from him to do anything of the kind. He would never have claimed to have received revelations unless it were absolutely true. For the one who attributes a lie to God and the one who denies His revelations go too far in the wrong: *So who did greater wrong than he who devised a lie against God or denied His signs?* (10:17) As the Prophet warns us strongly against committing the second of these two very grave wrongs, he himself would not even commit the first by inventing fabrications and attributing them to God: *Truly, the ones who sin will not prosper.* (10:17)

KNOWING SOMETHING UNKNOWN TO GOD

This section continues with its account of what the ungrateful say and so following previous, earlier communities: (10:18)

When we deviate from the truth, there is no end to how meaningless this is. The numerous deities to whom we address our worship can neither harm nor benefit us in any way. Nevertheless, some of us think that they have a role to play claiming that: *They say: These are our intercessors with God.* (10:18)

In response, the Prophet is told to say to the ungrateful: *Say: Are you telling God of what He knows not in the heavens nor in and on*

the earth? (10:18) God does not know anyone who can intercede with Him. Do you then presume to know what is unknown to God Himself? Are you, by implication, informing Him of the existence in the heavens or in and on the earth of beings He is not aware of? Here the Quran adopts sarcasm as the means to best counter their unrivalled absurdity. But this is followed with a statement of God's glorification that makes it clear that all their claims are false: *Glory be to Him and exalted is He above partners they ascribe.* (10:18)

The Quran then clarifies that the claim that God has partners is something that developed over time. Originally our human nature as the human species believed in God's Oneness. Only later did people in the past begin to disagree about this: *And humanity had not been but one community but, then, they became at variance.* (10:19) God in His wisdom determined to let them be until their appointed time. His will is done and His purpose is accomplished? *And if it were not for a Word that preceded from **your** Lord, it would be decided between them immediately about what they are at variance in it.* (10:19)

Then the account of what those new generations given power on earth said continues: *And they say: Why was a sign not caused to descend from his Lord?* (10:20) All the signs that this great revelation includes do not seem to be enough for them. Nor are they satisfied with all the signs that they see in the universe. They appeal for a miracle like the ones shown to earlier communities. Their request shows them to be totally unaware of the nature of the Prophet's message and its own great miracle. It is not a temporary miracle that is over and done with once a community has seen it. The Quran is a permanent miracle that addresses our hearts and minds from one generation to another.

In reply to this request, God directs the Prophet to refer them to Him, for He alone knows what He has in store for them. He alone will determine whether He shows them some miracle or not: *Say: Truly, the unseen belongs only to God. So wait awhile. Truly, I am with you of the ones who are waiting awhile.* (10:20)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 10:11-10:20

WHO IS GOD?

Is God who quicken's the worst for humanity. God caused generations to perish because they did wrong and denied Our Messengers. We made humanity vicegerents on earth so see what you would do.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quranic message tells the Prophet to say: It is not possible for me to substitute it of my own accord. I only follow what is revealed to me. I fear if

I rebelled against my Lord a punishment on the Day. If God willed, I would not have related it to you (the ungrateful) nor would He have caused you to recognize it. Will you not be reasonable? Say: Are you ungrateful telling God what He knows not in the heavens nor in and on the earth? Glory be to Him. Say: The unseen belongs only to God. So wait awhile. I am waiting awhile with you.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

This section refers to the challenge given by the ungrateful in Makkah to Prophet Muhammad. They demand that he immediately give the punishment he warns them against. They are told that setting such punishment to a specific time is an aspect of God's mercy. A scene is then drawn to demonstrate how they behave when they suffer some affliction. At that moment, their nature returns to its purity and they appeal to God, their Lord. When the affliction is relieved, those who habitually go beyond the limits revert to their erring ways. They are then reminded of the fate of earlier communities who also transgressed. This serves as a warning to stop them exceeding their limits. After all, this present life is a test which determines their destiny.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message states that it is not possible for the Prophet to substitute the signs of the Quran on his own accord. Was it possible for the Prophet to substitute signs of the Quran? The Messenger only follows what is revealed to him. The revelation comes from God alone. Revelation is from

God alone. The Messenger only recites what is revealed to him by God. God sent the revelation to the Messenger.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I kept an intellectual journal where I described a situation that was emotionally significant to me, that I deeply cared about.
I responded to the situation and wrote about it in my journal.
I realized what was going on in the situation.
I dug beneath the surface.
I assessed the implications of my analysis.
I learned more about myself.

LESSON 51(3). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS

WHAT IS PERSEVERANCE?

Perseverance is being willing and conscious of the need to pursue insights and truths despite difficulties, obstacles, and frustrations; a firm adherence to rational principles despite irrational opposition of others; a sense of the need to struggle with confusion and unsettled questions over an extended period of time in order to achieve deeper understanding or insight. This trait is undermined when others continually provide the answers, do your thinking for you or substitute easy tricks, algorithms, and short cuts for careful, independent thought.

WHAT DOES PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS MEAN?

Perseverance in goodness is an attribute of God: *And whatever you have of divine blessing is from God.* (16:53) and, therefore, it becomes the duty of every person to obey his own impulse to good: *And whoever volunteered good, then, truly, God is One Who is Responsive, Knowing.* (2:158) He should do good as God has been good to all: d*o good even as God did good to you* (28:77) and love those who do good: *And do good. Truly, God loves the ones who are doers of good.* (2:195) Believers hasten in every good work. As all prophets were quick in emulating good works, (21:90) so all people are advised to strive together (as in a race) towards all that is good: *Be forward, then, in good deeds.* (2:148) and virtuous. All good things are for the believers; goodly reward in the hereafter and highest grace of God awaits those who are foremost in good deeds: *some of them are ones who take the lead with good deeds by permission of God. That is the greater grace.* (35:32) Believers are advised to repel evil with what is better, for thereby enmity will change into warm friendship: *Drive back with what is fairer. Then, behold he who between you and between him was enmity as if he had been a protector, a loyal friend.* (41:34) It is often reflective in that students have to go back and think about similar problems that they had faced before and re-analyze them. They do not let difficulties, obstacles and frustrations stop them from pursuing truths with their insight (the capacity to gain an accurate and deep intuitive understanding of a person or thing).

QURANIC CHAPTER 10: JONAH (YUNUS)
SIGNS 10:21-10:30

Makkah: *And when We caused humanity*
to experience mercy
after tribulation afflicted them, that is when they conspired against
Our signs.

Say: God is Swifter in planning.
Truly, Our messengers write down what you plan. (10:21)
He it is Who sets you in motion through dry land and the sea
until when you had been in boats
and they ran them with the good wind and they were glad in it.
A tempest wind drew near them.
Waves drew near from every place,
and they thought that they were enclosed by it.
They called to God, ones who are sincere
and devoted in their way of life to Him saying:
*If **You** were to rescue us from this, we will,*
certainly, be of the ones who are thankful. (10:22)
But when He rescued them, that is when they are insolent
in and on the earth without right.
O humanity, your insolence is only against yourselves,
an enjoyment of this present life. Again, to Us is your return.
Then, We will tell you what you had been doing. (10:23)
The parable of this present life is but like water
that We caused to descend from heaven.
It mingled with the plants of the earth
—from which you eat—humanity and flocks—
until when the earth took its ornaments
and was decorated and its people thought that,
truly, they are ones who have power over it!
Our command approached it by nighttime or by daytime.
Then, We made it stubble as if it flourished not yesterday.
Thus, We explain distinctly the signs for a folk who reflect. (10:24)
And God calls to the Abode of Peace
and He guides whom He wills to a straight path. (10:25)
For those who did good is the fairer and increase.
Neither will gloom come over their faces nor abasement.
Those are the Companions of the Garden.
They are ones who will dwell in it forever. (10:26)
And for those who earned evil deeds,
the recompense of an evil deed will be its like
and abasement will come over them.
They will have none but God as One Who Saves from Harm.
It is as if their faces were covered
with a strip of the night, one in darkness.
Those are the Companions of the Fire.
They are ones who will dwell in it forever. (10:27)
And on a Day We will assemble them altogether.
Again, We will say to those who ascribed partners with God:

Stay in your place, you and your ascribed associates.
Then, We will set a space between them.
And their ascribed associates would say:
It had not been us that you were worshipping. (10:28)

COMMENTARY°

Now the chapter goes on to speak of human nature when people are shown God's grace after having experienced misfortune and hardship. It gives them an example of what actually takes place in real life. The scene so depicted is vivid and powerful:s (10:21-10:23)

Strange indeed is this human creature, for he does not remember God except in times of hardship and affliction. He does not remove from his nature all the bad influences that distort it, bringing it back to its purity, except when he feels the pressure of misfortune weighing heavily upon him. But when he feels safe and secure, he either forgets or transgresses. The only exceptions are those who follow God's guidance. Their nature remains pure and responsive all the time. It enjoys the purity of faith which keeps it clean and shining: *And when We caused humanity to experience mercy after tribulation afflicted them, that is when they conspired against Our signs.* (10:21)

When the Quraysh at the Prophet's time experienced drought and feared for their lives, they went to the Prophet, appealing to him by their ties of kinship, to pray to God on their behalf. He did and God answered his prayers, sending rain in abundance. But the Quraysh did not fulfill their pledges. They schemed against God's revelations and continued in their erring ways. Indeed this is a constant phenomenon, unless one follows God's guidance.

God is certainly more able to plan: *Say: God is Swifter in planning.* (10:21) When their scheming is known in advance, it is very easy to stop: *Truly, Our messengers write down what you plan.* (10:21) Nothing of it is overlooked or forgotten. As for the identity of those messengers and how they record and write, all we know is that which we can glean from statements like the present one. We accept these statements as they are, without trying to interpret them further.

Then we are given a very vivid scene which is portrayed as if it is happening before our eyes. We react to it with feeling and emotion. It begins with establishing the fact of God"s power that controls both what is moving and what is motionless: *He it is Who sets you in motion through dry land and the sea.* (10:22) The entire chapter emphasizes the fact of God's limitless power which controls the whole universe and the destiny of all creatures that live in it.

The full scene then unfolds before us: *Until when you had been*

in boats (10:22) As we look we see the ships moving on their way: *And they ran them with the good wind and they were glad in it.* (10:22) We also learn about the feelings of those who are on board: *they were glad in it.* (10:22) In the midst of this atmosphere of complete serenity, and the happiness that it spreads, everyone is suddenly jolted: *A tempest wind drew near them.* (10:22) What a calamity! The ships start to shake violently, and the waves hit against them time and again, and they spin like a feather in the air. Those on board are overtaken with fear, feeling that there is no escape: *and they thought that they were enclosed by it.* (10: 22) There is simply nowhere to turn.

At that moment, and in the midst of all this chaos, their nature sheds all the impurities it had accumulated, blunting its reactions. Their minds rid themselves of all wrong thoughts. Their nature reverts to its original condition, undistorted. It acknowledges God as the only Lord in the universe and submits to Him alone: *They called to God, ones who are sincere and devoted in their way of life to Him. saying: If You were to rescue us from this, we will, certainly, be of the ones who are thankful.* (10:22)

Then the winds subside, and the waves die down. The people on board begin to catch their breath, and their pounding hearts slow down. Soon the ships reach the shore, and the people feel secure. When they step on land, feeling its firmness, they are sure that they are not about to die. They have their lives ahead of them. Then what?

A DESCRIPTION OF LIFE IN THIS WORLD

O humanity, your insolence is only against yourselves. (10:23) Whether these offenses are committed against oneself, by sending it on the way to death, letting it indulge in disobedience that is certain to make it the loser, or offenses against all humanity since humanity represents one soul, the offenders will suffer the consequences. These consequences will also be shared by those who allow them to offend:

O humanity, your insolence is only against yourselves, an enjoyment of this present life. (10:23) That then is all that we will have. *Again, to Us is your return. Then, We will tell you what you had been doing.* (10:23) That is the reckoning and reward that take place in the hereafter, when all the misery and suffering of this life is clearly over.

So how much are the pleasures of this life worth? What is the reality of their enjoyment? This is described in a Quranic scene that shows aspects of everyday activity, but to which most of us pay little attention: (10:24-10:25)

Yet in the midst of all this pleasure and fine celebration, our con-

fidence is suddenly broken into pieces. What has happened? The answer is simple: *Our command approached it by nighttime or by daytime. Then, We made it stubble as if it flourished not yesterday.* (10:24) It all happens in a moment. It is all expressed in a sentence. Such mode of expression is a deliberate contrast to the detailed description which paints the land's fertility and beauty, as well as people's pleasure and confidence.

Such is the life of this world that some of us regard as our utmost aspiration, and for the pleasures of which they sacrifice their future life. It is a life in that there is no settlement or security. Our control over it is very limited indeed. The chapter then contrasts this image with the other world: *And God calls to the Abode of Peace and He guides whom He wills to a straight path.* (10:25)

The present ones are clearer, certain to receive the right response from any person with an uncorrupted nature. The ungrateful genuinely feared that the Quran would weaken them considerably. That is why they urged one another not to listen to it because they wanted to continue with their erring beliefs and practices: (10:26-10:27)

The last sign in the preceding passage said: *And God calls to the Abode of Peace and He guides whom He wills to a straight path.* (10:25) Here we have an outline of the rules that determine the reward of those who follow God's guidance and those who turn away from it. It shows God's grace, mercy, fairness and justice in both types of reward.

Those who do well in their choice of belief and practice, recognizing the right path and understanding the universal law which leads to the abode of peace will have a goodly reward which is the fair outcome of what they do. But they will also have something more of God's unlimited bounty: *For those who did good is the fairer and increase.* (10:26) They will be spared the misery of the Day of Resurrection, and the stress experienced by others before judgment is passed on all creatures: *Neither will gloom come over their faces nor abasement.* (10:26)

Such people who enjoy this high position: *Those are the Companions of the Garden.* (10:26) They are its owners and dwellers, and there *They are ones who will dwell in it forever.*

And for those who earned evil deeds, (10:27) A more literal translation of this phrase would be 'those who have earned evil'. The earnings they have made out of the transaction of this life are simply evil. They will have their fair reward, which means that they will not have their punishment increased or doubled. They are simply given their reward, like for like: *The recompense of an evil deed will be its like.* (10:27) They are the ones to endure humiliation which weighs

down heavily on them: *Abasement will come over them. They will have none but God as One Who Saves from Harm.* (10:27) There is simply no one to provide them with protection against the inevitable workings of divine law which metes out punishment to those who choose the path of evil.

The section then paints an image of the mental darkness that overshadows them and leaves its impact on their terrified faces. *It is as if their faces were covered with a strip of the night, one in darkness.* (10:27) The whole atmosphere is dark, causing much fear and apprehension. Our faces are made to look as if we are wearing the cover of the dark night.

Those who are abandoned in the midst of all this darkness are destined for the fire: *Those are the Companions of the Fire. They are ones who will dwell in it forever.* (10:27)

But where are those whom they claimed to be God's partners and the ones they thought would intercede on their behalf? How come they could not provide them with any protection? What is happening to them on this fearful Day of Resurrection: (10:28-10:30)

To all these, ungrateful and partners, an order is given: *Again, We will say to those who ascribed partners with God: Stay in your place, you and your ascribed associates.* (10:28) Stop where you are. That is the order. They must stand still the moment the order is issued, for an order given on that day is complied with immediately, without question. Then one group is set apart from the other: *Then, We will set a space between them. And their ascribed associates would say: It had not been us that you were worshipping.* (10:28)

At this point the ungrateful do not speak. It is their claimed partners that speak to exonerate themselves from the crime committed by the ungrateful when they worshipped them in place of God, or in association with Him. They speak to make it clear that they were totally unaware of their being worshipped. As such, they have had no role in the crime. They appeal to God to be their witness: *And God sufficed as a witness between you and between us. We had been of your worship certainly, ones who are heedless.* (10:29)

At this point when everything is laid open, every soul will know the true nature of the deeds it did, realizing its inevitable outcome: *There every soul will be tried for what it has did in the past.* (10: 30) What is abundantly clear to all at that moment is the fact that there is only one God to whom all shall return. Everything else is false: *And they would be returned to God, their Defender, The Truth.* (10:30)

There the ungrateful will find nothing of what they used to claim

and fabricate. All prove to have no real existence. *And from them will go astray what they had been devising.* (10:30) It is a vivid scene which is raised before our eyes so that we can examine all its details and the truth it reflects. It is painted in a few words which have an effect far superior to what a mere statement of facts supported by clear arguments would have produced.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 10:21-10:30

WHO IS GOD?

God causes humanity to experience mercy after tribulation afflicted them. That is when they conspired against Our signs.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

When the human being is in trouble, they call to God, but when God rescues them, they turn away, ungrateful. For those who do good, there is the fairer and increase. They are the Companions of the Garden. For those who earned evil deeds, they are the Companions of the Fire.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

When the human being is in trouble, they call to God, but when God rescues them, they turn away, ungrateful the Quran states. When do people call to God? When the human being is in trouble, he calls to God. When the human being is in trouble, they call to God, but when God rescues them, they turn away, ungrateful. Human beings forget God except in times of difficulties. It

is a sign of ingratitude not to remember God at all times. When the human being is in trouble, they call to God, but when God rescues them, they turn away, ungrateful.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I chose one moral trait to strive for in one month.
I focused on how I can develop that positive trait in myself.
I recognized that I was becoming defensive when someone tried to point out a deficiency in my thinking.
I owned up to my own ignorance on the moral trait and began to deal with it.

LESSON 51(4). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT EMPATHETIC ALTRUISM

There is yet a higher stage of moral achievement described as selfless concern and love for the welfare of others or altruism (*ihsan*) which signifies performance of moral action in conformity with the moral ideal with the added sense of deep loyalty to the cause of God, done in the most graceful way that is motivated by a unique love for God. Performance of God-conscious actions accompanied by a true faith is only a stage in the moral life of a person which, after several stages, gradually matures into altruism (*ihsan*). Altruism is based on having a deep love for God. Love as a human ideal demands that the human being should love God as the complete embodiment of all moral values above everything else.

Altruism is the belief in or practice of disinterested and selfless concern for the well-being of others.

Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another. Empathic Altruism is to believe in an practice a selfless concern for the well-being of others through sharing the feelings of another.

Emphatic altruism is understanding the need to imaginatively put oneself in the place of others to genuinely understand them. Students must recognize their egocentric tendency to identify truth with their immediate perceptions or longstanding beliefs. Empathic altruism correlates with the ability to accurately reconstruct the viewpoints and reasoning of others and to reason from premises, assumptions, and ideas other than their own. This trait also requires that they remember occasions when they were wrong, despite an intense conviction that they were right, and consider that they might be similarly deceived in a case at hand.

QURANIC CHAPTER 10: JONAH (YUNUS)
SIGNS 10:31-10:40

Makkah: *Say: Who provides for you*
from the heaven and the earth?
Who controls having the ability to hear and sight?
And Who brings out the living from the dead
and brings out the dead from the living?
And who manages the command?
They will, then, say: God!
Say: Will you not be God-conscious? (10:31)
Such is God, your Lord, The Truth.
And what else is there after The Truth
but wandering astray?
Where, then, turn you away? (10:32)
Thus, was the Word of your Lord

realized against those who disobeyed
that they will not believe. (10:33)
Say: Are there among your ascribed associates with God
anyone who begins the creation and, then, causes it to return?
Say: God begins the creation.
Again, He causes it to return.
Then, how you are misled! (10:34)
Say: Are there among your ascribed associates
with God anyone who guides to The Truth?
Say: God guides to The Truth.
Has not He who guides to The Truth
a better right to be followed
than he who guides not unless he himself be guided?
What is the matter with you? How you give judgment! (10:35)
And most of them follow nothing but opinion.
Truly, opinion avails them not against The Truth at all.
Truly, God is Knowing of what they accomplish. (10:36)
This Recitation had not been devised by other than God
because it establishes as true what was before it
and as a decisive explanation of the Book.
There is no doubt in it.
It is from the Lord of the worlds. (10:37)
Or they will say: He devised it.
Say: Bring a chapter of the Quran like it
and call to whomever you were able—other than God—
if you had been ones who are sincere. (10:38)
Nay! They denied the knowledge that they comprehend not
while approaches them not the interpretation.
Thus, those who were before them denied.
So look on how had been the Ultimate End
of the ones who are unjust! (10:39)
Madinah (10:40)

COMMENTARY°

GIVING LIFE AND CAUSING DEATH

The first round in this passage took us to the gathering of all on the Day of Resurrection when all false claims and fabrications are shown to have no validity whatsoever. God's is the only power on that day. Now the chapter speaks of matters human beings see in their lives, and in their own souls, admitting that they are only done by God and subject to His control. (10:31-10:32)

The ungrateful do not necessarily deny God's existence, nor do they deny that He is the One who creates, provides sustenance for

His creation and controls the whole universe. They simply ascribe divinity to other beings whom they consider to be God's partners. They claim that these are able to bring them nearer to God or that they had their own power, independent of God's. Here the section addresses them taking their own beliefs as its starting point. It aims to alert their consciousness and make them reflect, so that they can discard their ill-conceived ideas: *Say: Who provides for you from the heaven and the earth?* (10:31)

Who controls having the ability to hear and sight? (10:31) Who is it that gives our organs their power or deprives them of it; who makes them healthy or malfunctioning? Who is it that makes us see and hear what we like or dislike? Although this may be the limit of our understanding of the functioning of these senses, it is enough to enable us to understand the significance of such a question.

And Who brings out the living from the dead and brings out the dead from the living? (10:31) We may consider everything that is motionless to be dead. On the other hand, motion and growth indicate life.

And who manages the command? (10:31) This question applies to all that has just been mentioned and to everything else, whether it relates to the affairs of the universe or to human affairs. Who regulates the great universal system that conducts the movement of all worlds in such a fine and elaborate manner? Who regulates the cycle of life and sets it along its finely tuned system? Who regulates the social laws that govern human life, without the slightest deviation from its course? The list of such questions is endless.

They will, then, say: God! The ungrateful who were the first to be addressed by the Quran did not deny God"s existence, or His control of these great issues. But as they deviated from the path of the truth, they began to associate partners with God, and to address worship rituals to such partners. Furthermore, they put into operation laws that God had not sanctioned.

Say: Will you not be God-conscious? (10:31) Since He is the One who provides sustenance, controls hearing and sight, brings the living out of the dead and the dead out of the living, and regulates all matters and affairs, should we not be God-conscious? The One who has all these attributes is indeed the true Lord who has no partners to be associated with Him.

WHO GUIDES TO THE TRUTH

Such is God, your Lord, The Truth. (10:32) Since the truth is one and cannot be present in more than one form at the same time, then whoever goes beyond it is in fundamental error. *And what else is*

there after The Truth but wandering astray. Where, then, turn you away? (10:32) When the truth is clearly evident, how can anyone look elsewhere for guidance?

The outcome of the deliberate denial of the truth by the ungrateful, despite their acknowledgement of its basis, is that God has made it a law of human nature that those who deviate from the sound logic of nature and the overall laws of creation will not be believers: *Thus, was the Word of your Lord realized against those who disobeyed that they will not believe.* (10:33) He does not prevent them from believing. Indeed the pointers to the truth and true faith are everywhere in the universe, and its logical basis is acknowledged by them.

The section then resumes its line of drawing attention to aspects of God's power and asks whether any of the partners the ungrateful associate with Him have any share in such power: (10:34-10:35)

The questions now addressed to those who are ungrateful concerning re-creation and guidance to the truth are asked on the basis of what they accept as true. They relate to conclusions they should arrive at with reflection. No answer is required of them. The answer is placed in front of them, outlining the conclusions to the premises they have accepted: *Say: God begins the creation.* (10:34)

This fact needs to be stated clearly to them, since they believe that God is the Creator, and acknowledge that He is the One who brings the living out of the dead. In fact the second life is closely similar to the process of bringing what is alive out of what is dead: *Again, He causes it to return.* (10:34) It is singularly strange that they should turn away from this fact when they accept its premise: *Then, how you are misled!* (10: 34) How is it that you choose error and accept false beliefs?

Say: God guides to The Truth. Has not He who guides to The Truth a better right to be followed than he who guides not unless he himself be guided? What is the matter with you? How you give judgment! (10:35) Does any such partner reveal scriptures, send messengers, lay down a law and a code of living, give warnings and direct people to the truth? Does any of them explain the signs that are available in the universe and within human nature, awakening minds that have been left in deep slumber and alerting disused faculties? They were aware of all this since God's Messenger presented it to them for their guidance. This was not something that they had already known and accepted, but rather something that actually took place before their very eyes. The Prophet was among them fulfilling the task God had assigned to him. Therefore, it is put to them as evidence of the truth they are called upon to acknowledge: *Say: God guides to The Truth.* (10:35)

This leads to another question with a ready answer: *Has not He who guides to The Truth a better right to be followed than he who guides not unless he himself be guided?* (10:35) There can only be a single answer to this question. Naturally, the one who guides humanity to the truth is the one to be followed, in preference to the one who is in need of guidance.

What is the matter with you? How you give judgment! (10:35) What has come over you that you clearly misjudge matters and deviate so badly from the truth?

And most of them follow nothing but opinion. Truly, opinion avails them not against The Truth at all. (10:36) They think that God has partners, but they do not try to test such thoughts either by reasoning or in practical terms. They think that their forefathers would not have worshipped idols unless those idols had something to deserve worship. But they do not question this false premise, nor do they free their minds from the shackles of following such thoughts blindly. They assume that God would not reveal anything to a human being from among them, but they do not question why God would not do so. They also assume that the Quran is authored by Muhammad, but they do not try to verify whether Muhammad is capable of authoring the Quran, when they themselves, human beings like him, are totally incapable of producing a chapter similar to the Quran. Thus they go about life nourishing a host of assumptions and thoughts that have no foundation. As the Quran describes it, they thrive on conjecture but this does not give them anything of substance. It is God alone who knows fully what they do.*Truly, God is Knowing of what they accomplish.* (10:36)

A BOOK OF GOD"S OWN DEVISING

The signs now begins a new round speaking of the Quran itself. It starts with a categorical statement that there is no way that the Quran could have been invented by anyone, followed by a challenge to the ungrateful to produce a single chapter like it. It then shows their judgement to be hasty, lacking solid ground. This is followed by stating the nature of their attitude to the Quran along with encouragement to the Prophet to remain steadfast regardless of the response he receives from them. The round concludes with a reference to the destiny awaiting those who are stubborn in their erroneous beliefs. It is a just and fitting destiny, determined by their deeds. (10:37-39)

This Recitation had not been devised by other than God. (10: 37) Such unique characteristics of topic and expression; such perfection of order and harmony; such completeness of the faith it preaches and the code for human life it lays down; such a thorough

concept of the nature of God, as well as the nature of life, human beings and the universe could never have been designed by anyone other than God. Only He is able to combine all this, because He is the One who knows the beginnings of all things and their ends, the apparent and the hidden. No one else can devise a system that is perfect, free of shortcomings and based on perfect knowledge.

This Recitation had not been devised by other than God. (10: 37) What is negated here is the very possibility that the Quran could ever have been fabricated or authored by anyone other than God. This is much more comprehensive and emphatic.

It establishes as true what was before it. (10:37) It confirms all the revelations and Scriptures given to earlier messengers. It confirms the original faith outlined by those messages and the good things they advocated. It is also *a decisive explanation of the Book* (10: 37) It is the same Book, outlining the same message preached by all messengers. There may be differences of detail in these messages, but the basic principles are the same. The Quran explains God's Book fully, making clear all the methods and means of goodness it outlines and how these are to be fulfilled and followed in human life. The faith is the same and the basic substance is the same, but the methods of goodness and the laws outlined are given each time in a degree of detail that suits human progress and development. When we came of age, we are addressed by the Quran as adults. We are no longer addressed by physical miracles that defy human intellect.

Moreover, it is a Book: *There is no doubt in it.* (10:37) This is an assertion that the Quran could never have been fabricated or attributed falsely to God. It is indeed a revelation by *It is from the Lord of the worlds.* (10:37)

Having stated the truth about the Quran, the signs speaks of a certain possibility: *Or they will say: He devised it. Say: Bring a chapter of the Quran like it and call to whomever you were able—other than God—if you had been ones who are sincere.* (10:38) The challenge is permanent, as is their inability to meet it. It continues for the rest of time and no one will ever be able to meet it. Anyone who appreciates the strength, beauty and artistic expression of the Arabic language will recognize that the Quranic style is unique, and that no human being could produce anything similar to it. So will those who study human social systems and legal principles.

CONJECTURE PREFERRED TO FACT!

Or they will say: He devised it. Say: Bring a chapter of the Quran like it and call to whomever you were able—other than God—if you had been ones who are sincere. (10:38) At this point, with the

chapter presenting this challenge, all argument is stopped and a clear statement is made to establish the fact that they rely only on conjecture, judging what they do not know.

Right judgement must be preceded by thorough knowledge, and not rely on personal preferences or unproved views. What they are judging is the revelation of the Quran and the truth of its promises and warnings. They have denied all these without having any firm knowledge to justify their denial, and without waiting for its true interpretation: *Nay! They denied the knowledge that they comprehend not while approaches them not the interpretation.* (10:39) In this they have followed in the footsteps of former communities who rejected God's revelations and associated partners with their Lord. They should consider the fate of those earlier communities in order to know what awaits them if they continue to reject the faith. *Thus, those who were before them denied. So look on how had been the Ultimate End of the ones who are unjust!* (10:39)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 10:31-10:40

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quranic message tells the Prophet to say to the ungrateful: Who provides for you from the heaven and the earth? Who controls having the ability to hear and sight? Who brings out the dead from the living? Who manages the command? They will say: God. Then, say: Will you not be God-conscious? Where do you turn away to? This is the Word of your Lord, Muhammad, realized against those who disobeyed. Say: Are there among your ascribed associates one who begins the creation and then causes its return? God beings the creation and causes it to return. How you are misled! Are there among your ascribed associates with God anyone who guides to the Truth? God guides to the Truth. Has the one who guides to the Truth have a better right to be worshiped than one who cannot guide unless he himself be guided? What is the matter with you ungrateful? How you give judgment! When the ungrateful say that you devised the revelation, say: Bring a chapter like it or call on whoever you want—other than God—if you are sincere.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message explains here that some of the divine gifts. The Quranic message tells the Prophet to ask: Who provides for you from the heaven and the earth? Who controls having the ability to hear and sight? And Who brings out the living from the dead and brings out the dead from the living? And who manages the command? The ungrateful will, then, say: God! The Prophet says: Will you not be God-conscious? Such is God, your Lord, The Truth. And what else is there after The Truth but wandering astray? Where, then, turn you away? Thus, was the Word of **your** Lord realized against those who disobeyed that they will not believe. The ungrateful continue to deny the message.Even though the ungrateful admit to a belief in God, they refuse to believe that there is only One God. The ungrateful worship several gods.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I recognized that by defining something, I was giving it meaning.
I realized that once I defined something, the meaning then determined how I feel about it, how I act upon it and the implications it had.
I realized that there is often more than one way to define or give meaning to something.
I was able to turn the negatives into positives.
I was able to turn my mistakes into opportunities to learn.
I was able to make a list of five recurrent negative contexts in which I feel frustrated, angry, unhappy or worried.
I identified the definition/meaning in each case that was causing my negative emotions.
I was able to find a positive definition for each and then plan for my new responses as well as new emotions.

LESSON 51(5). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT FAIRNESS

Developing fairness requires the willingness and consciousness of the need to entertain all viewpoints sympathetically and to assess them with the same moral traits, without reference to one's own feelings or vested interests, or the feelings or vested interests of one's friends, community, or nation. It implies adherence to moral traits without reference to one's own advantage or the advantage of one's group.

The fair and just Quranic critical thinkers work to improve their thinking whenever they can. They want things for themselves, but they aren't selfish. They want to help other people. They want to help make the world better for everyone. They are willing to give things up to help others (when it makes sense to). They don't always have the right answers, but they work to improve their thinking (and actions) over time.

Fairness and justice is a divine attribute and the Quran emphasizes that we should adopt it as a moral ideal. God commands people to be just towards one another: *Say: My Lord commanded me to justice* (7:29); truly, *God commands justice and kindness and giving to one who is a possessor of kinship and He prohibits depravity and ones who are unlawful and insolent. He admonishes you so that perhaps you will recollect.* (16:90); *and I was commanded to be just among you* (42:15), and, in judging between person and person, to judge justly: *And when you gave judgment between humanity, give judgment justly* (4:58) *for He loves those who judge justly.*

All believers stand firmly for justice even if it goes against themselves, their parents, their relatives, without any distinction of rich and poor: *Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God even against yourselves or the ones who are your parents or the nearest of kin, whether you would be rich or poor.* (4:135) God's revelation itself is an embodiment of truth and justice: *Completed was the Word of your Lord in sincerity and justice.* (6:115) It is revealed with the Balance (of right and wrong) so that people may stand forth for justice: *We caused the Book to descend with them and the Balance so that humanity may uphold equity.* (57:25)

The value of justice is absolute and morally binding and the believers are, therefore, warned that they should not let the hatred of some people lead them to transgress the limits of justice or make them depart from the ideal of justice, for justice is very near to piety and righteousness: *Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God and let not that you detest a folk drive you into not dealing justly. Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness.* (5:8)

Justice demands that people should be true in word and deed: *They are the ones who remain steadfast and the ones who are sincere and the ones who are morally obligated and the ones who spend in the way of God and the ones who ask for forgiveness at the breaking of day* (3:17) faithfully observe the contracts which they have made and fulfill all obligations.

QURANIC CHAPTER 10: JONAH (YUNUS)
SIGNS 10:41-10:53

Makkah: *And if they denied **you**, then, **you** say:*
For me are my actions and for you are your actions.
You are free of what I do
and I am free of what you do. (10:41)
*And among them are some who listen to **you**.*
*So have **you** caused someone unwilling to hear,*
to hear if they had not been reasonable? (10:42)
*And among them are some who look on **you**.*
*So have **you** guided*
the unwilling to see if they had not been perceiving? (10:43)
Truly, God does not wrong humanity at all,
but humanity does wrong itself. (10:44)
And on a Day He will assemble them
as if they had not been lingering in expectation
but an hour of the daytime.
They will recognize one another among themselves.
Surely, those who denied lost the meeting with God
and they had not been ones who are truly guided. (10:45)
*Whether We cause **you** to see some of what We promise them*
*or We call **you** to Us, then, to Us is their return.*
Again, God will be witness to what they accomplish. (10:46)
Every community has its Messenger.
So, then, when their Messenger drew near,
it would be decided between them with equity.
And they, they will not be wronged. (10:47)
And they say: When is this promise
if you had been ones who are sincere? (10:48)
Say: I control not either hurt or profit for myself,
but what God willed.
To every community there is a term.
When their term draws near,
neither will they delay it an hour
nor will they press it forward. (10:49)
Say: Considered you
that if His punishment approached you at nighttime
or at daytime, for which portion would
the ones who sin be ones who seek to hasten? (10:50)
Again, when it falls on you, believed you in it?
Now? While you had been seeking to hasten it? (10:51)
Again, it would be said to those who did wrong:

Experience the infinite punishment!
Will you be given recompense
but for what you had been earning? (10:52)
*And they ask **you** to be told: Is it true?*
Say: Yes! By my Lord it is The Truth
and you are not ones who frustrate Him. (10:53)

COMMENTARY°

Having explained their attitude to the Quran the signs address the Prophet, telling him not to let himself be affected by their rejection of the truth. He is to disown them and their deeds, declaring that he has nothing to do with them, and by sticking to the truth, stating it clearly and decisively: *And if they denied **you**, then, **you** say: For me are my actions and for you are your actions. You are free of what I do and I am free of what you do.* (10:41) This directive to the Prophet is also meant to touch their consciences. They and their actions are disowned by the Prophet. Now they can face the fate they have been told about without his support. It is yet another way of awakening their hearts.

The chapter goes on to portray how they behave with the Prophet. They listen to him and look at him, but they have already sealed their hearts and minds. Therefore, their faculty of perception cannot make any sense of what they hear and see: *And among them are some who listen to **you**. So have **you** caused someone unwilling to hear, to hear if they had not been reasonable? And among them are some who look on **you**. So have **you** guided the unwilling to see if they had not been perceiving?* (10:42-10:43)

Those who cannot use their reason to understand what they hear or appreciate what they see are always present in large numbers everywhere. The Prophet cannot do anything for them because they refuse to learn how to discern and reason. The Prophet cannot make the deaf hear or the blind see. Only God can do that. He, however, has set a law in operation and left His creatures to reap the results of their dealings according to this law. He has given them ears, eyes and minds to hear, see and reason with, so that they may follow the true guidance He has sent them. If they decide to put these faculties out of order, they will reap the consequences according to His law. Such consequences are their fair reward, for God does not treat anyone with injustice: *Truly, God does not wrong humanity at all, but humanity does wrong itself.* (10:44)

WHEN GOD IS THE WITNESS

The next signs quickly touch the hearts of the ungrateful, por-

traying as they do a scene from the Day of Judgment. In this scene the whole of life which is so heavily present in their consciousness, and which encompasses all their concerns and preoccupations appears to be no more than a short trip which people undertake before returning to their permanent abode: (10:45-10:53)

This passage begins with a clear statement reaffirming the fact that such people will undoubtedly return to God, whether they experience some of what the Prophet has warned them against in his life or after his death. The return in both cases is to God who is a witness of all they do at all times, during the lifetime of the Prophet or afterwards. Nothing of what they do will ever be lost. The Prophet"s death will not exempt them from facing the reckoning. *Whether We cause you to see some of what We promise them or We call you to Us, then, to Us is their return.* (10:46)

Everything takes place according to deliberate planning. Nothing is lost or changed on account of any emergencies or special circumstances. *Again, God will be witness to what they accomplish.* (10:46) Every community is left to wait until its messenger comes to warn them and explain all the facts to them. Thus they are given their rights in accordance with the condition God has imposed upon Himself that He would not punish any community until He has sent them a messenger with a clear message. When this has taken place, they will have no excuse. They will be judged fairly, on the basis of their response to the messenger: *Every community has its Messenger. So, then, when their Messenger drew near, it would be decided between them with equity. And they, they will not be wronged.* (10:47)

The last two signs should be taken as the basis of an understanding of the nature of God and servitude to Him. The Quran is keen to explain it at every occasion, in different ways and methods. Here the Prophet is told that what is to become of this faith and the people to whom it is addressed belongs entirely to God. The Prophet himself has no say in it. His role is that of conveying the message he has been given. Anything beyond that belongs to God alone.

WHY BRING ABOUT GOD'S PUNISHMENT

The question was asked by way of a challenge. *And they say: When is this promise if you had been ones who are sincere?* (10:48) They were actually demanding that whatever the Prophet warned them against be fulfilled, and that God's judgment be made just as it had been on earlier communities which denied God's messengers. But the answer the Prophet is instructed to give makes all issues succinctly clear: *Say: I control not either hurt or profit for myself, but what God willed. To every community there is a term. When their*

term draws near, neither will they delay it an hour nor will they press it forward. (10:49)

Say: I control not either hurt or profit for myself, but what God willed. (10:49) It is all, then, by God's will. He brings His word to pass and He puts His warnings into effect whenever He pleases. His law will never fail, and the term He has set will fall due as He has determined: *To every community there is a term. When their term draws near, neither will they delay it an hour nor will they press it forward.* (10:49) The term may end with physical destruction, as happened to earlier communities, or it may take a metaphorical form, which leaves a community lost, vanquished. This may last for some time and the community may then rise again, or it may be permanent and the community continues its decline.

The chapter then adds a surprising touch. The ungrateful are led from a position where they challenge and ridicule to one where they are threatened: *Say: Considered you that if His punishment approached you at nighttime or at daytime, for which portion would the ones who sin be ones who seek to hasten?* (10:50) God's punishment will come at a time and place unknown to human beings. It may come during the night when people are asleep, or in the day when they are awake and alert. Yet their alertness will not prevent it. So why should they wish to hasten it when it brings them no good?

While they are still in shock at the idea that their punishment may be very close, the next sign delivers an even greater shock, showing that punishment as having actually occurred when it has not. This is done to alert people's consciences and heighten their feelings to its reality. *Again, when it falls on you, believed you in it? Now? While you had been seeking to hasten it?* (10:51)

The image shows the punishment as having been inflicted, and they as having believed in it. It is as if they are being rebuked now for not believing when they had every reason to do so before they were punished. To complete this future scene, painted as if it is happening now, the next sign says: *Again, it would be said to those who did wrong: Experience the infinite punishment! Will you be given recompense but for what you had been earning?* (10:52) Thus the chapter takes us to the moment of reckoning and punishment while a few moments and a couple of signs earlier we are still in this life, listening to God's address to His Messenger, telling him of the fate of those who persist in denying his message.

The scene concludes with the ungrateful asking the Prophet about whether the warning and punishment are really true. Deep inside, they are shaken. The answer is emphatic, asserted with an oath that it is most certain: *And they ask you to be told: Is it true?* (10:53)

That is a remarkable reply indeed: '*Say: Yes! By my Lord.* (10:53) I know my Lord and His power, and I do not make a false oath. I only swear to assert the truth in a most serious manner: *It is The Truth and you are not ones who frustrate Him.* (10:53) He can always gather you and bring you to the reckoning and then administer His reward or punishment, as you deserve.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 10:41-10:53

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

This is followed by an address to the Prophet concerning the warnings God gives to those who deny the truth of His revelations. It is a clear warning wrapped in a cover of mystery. The Quranic message tells the Prophet: If the ungrateful deny you, Muhammad, then you say: For me are my actions and for you are your actions. You are free of what I do and I am free of what you do. There will be some who will listen to you. Have you, Muhammad, caused someone unwilling to hear, to hear if they had not been reasonable? Have you, Muhammad, guided the unwilling to see if they had not been perceiving? Whether We cause you, Muhammad to see some of what We promise them or We call you, Muhammad, to us, to Us is their return. Say: I control neither hurt nor profit for myself, but what God willed. Say: Considered you that if His punishment approached you at nighttime or at daytime, for which portion would the ones who sin be ones who seek to hasten? And the ungrateful ask you, Muhammad, to be told: Is it true? Say: Yes! By my Lord, it is The Truth and you ungrateful are not ones who frustrate Him.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The ungrateful do not know whether it will come to pass within a day or so, or whether they will have to wait until the Day of Judgment. Thus it remains a constant threat to them, so that they may take heed and mend their ways. Gradually the passage which begins with a warning moves on to conclude with a description of the situation when nothing is of any use, and no one can buy his escape from God's punishment, not even if he had the whole world to offer. On the Day when God sits in judgement, no one shall suffer any injustice. Again we find here an example of the Quranic method which links this life with the life to come, in just a few touching words. But it also describes the link between the two lives as it is in reality, and as they should always be viewed from a Quranic standpoint.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary**

(concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

To every community there is a term the Quranic message says. Can the term be delayed? When its term draws near it will neither be delay by an hour or will it be able to press it forward. God determines the fate of a community. When the time comes, there is no delaying it nor moving it forward. We need to be ready each and every day as we do not know when the term for our community is. Every community has its term.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I found that sometimes I am not fair-minded.
I was able to contrast the reasoning of a believer and an ungrateful person based on Quranic signs.
I gained insight into fair-mindedness and developing a sense of justice when I considered multiple points of view.

LESSON 51(6). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL STANDARD LOGIC (BEING REASONABLE)

Logic is a word that has many meanings and uses:

1) Correct reasoning or the study of correct reasoning and its foundations.
2) The relationships between propositions (supports, assumes, implies, contradicts, counts against, is relevant to).
3) The system of principles, concepts, and assumptions that are the basis for Quranic Studies.
4) Reasoning that bears upon the truth or justification of any belief or set of beliefs.
5) Reasoning that bears upon an answer to any question or set of questions.

The word logic relates to the question of explanation. As human thought and behavior is to some extent based on logic rather than instinct, we try to figure things out using ideas, meanings, and thought. Such intellectual behavior inevitably involves logic or considerations of a logical sort: some sense of what is relevant and irrelevant, of what supports and what counts against a belief, of what we should and should not assume, of what we should and should not claim, of what we do and do not know, of what is and is not implied, of what does and does not contradict, of what we should or should not do or believe.

Concepts have a logic in that we can investigate the conditions under which they do and do not apply, of what is relevant or irrelevant to them, of what they do or don't imply, etc. Questions have a logic in that we can investigate the conditions under which they can be settled. Quranic Studies has a logic in that the Quran has purposes and a set of logical structures that bear upon those purposes: assumptions, concepts, issues, data, theories, claims, implications, consequences, etc.

The concept of logic also plays an essential role in critical thinking. Unfortunately, it takes a considerable length of time before most people become comfortable with its many uses. In part, this is due to people's failure to study their own thinking in keeping with the standards of reason and logic. This is not to deny, of course, that logic is involved in all human thinking. It is rather to say that the logic we use is often implicit, unexpressed, and sometimes contradictory.

According to the Quran to be logical is to be "reasonable" (*'aqala*), to use one's intellect (*'aql*). This course in Quranic Studies is to learn from Quranic logic. Events described in the Quran do not just happen. The sacred text's description of events make sense when you understand its meaning.

Questions should be asked with a method to them. Teachers should help

students figure out the logic behind the sign (*ayah*) or signs (*ayat*). Their answers should always reference particular Quranic signs. How they learn to support their answers by giving reasons and references to the sign(s) is important, not any specific answer that they give.

In many cases, Quranic learning has been through rote memorization and drills based on having memorized the signs. When students learn through this method, they are not logically informed as to what the Quranic signs are saying. They are learning only by association or rote memorization without connecting the revelation to how they think or how they chose to live their life. As a result, students learn to think of the Quranic text as something they simply memorize without ever understanding the meaning of what it says. In doing so, they do not integrate the meanings of the Quranic message into their lives, they do not "own" it. They rarely relate, that is, make relevant, what they have memorized to their own experience nor are they able to critique each by means of the other. They rarely try to test by making it a part of their everyday life. They rarely ask questions such as:

> Why is this so? How does this relate to what I already know?
> How does this relate to what I am learning in other classes?

With the method of memorization of the sacred text, very few studen ever think that they need to implement what they are learning in their life n have they learned how to do so.

The Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge mixed with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression (*al-tafaqquh fi'l-din*), that is, "understands the religion." This means as a reasonable approach filled with curiosity to constructing a worldview of Islam. Islam, in other words, advises knowledge through analysis and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely rigid and authoritarian approach that teaches blind certainty and a closed-mindedness that results in an imprisonment of the mind so complete that the prisoner does not even know that his or her mind has been imprisoned. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions: Faith based on detailed analysis (*al-iman al-tafsilli*) as opposed to undigested and uncomprehended faith (*al-iman al-ijmali*). The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the clerics of all the leading schools of thought.

QURANIC CHAPTER 10: JONAH (YUNUS)
SIGNS 10:54-10:60

Makkah: *And if there would be*

for every person who did wrong
whatever is in or on the earth,
he would, certainly, offer it for his ransom.
And they would keep secret their self-reproach
when they considered the punishment.
But it will be decided between them with equity.
And they, they will not be wronged. (10:54)
No doubt to God belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth.
No doubt the promise of God is true,
but most of them know not. (10:55)
It is He Who gives life and causes to die
and to Him you will return. (10:56)
O humanity! Surely, an admonishment drew near you
from your Lord
and a healing for what is in the breasts and a guidance
and mercy for ones who believe. (10:57)
Say: In the grace of God and in His mercy,
therein let them be glad.
That is better than what they gather. (10:58)
Say: Considered you from what God caused to descend
for you of provision
and that you made some of it unlawful and some lawful?
Say: Gave God permission to you or devise
you against God? (10:59)
And what is the opinion of those who devise a lie
against God on the Day of Resurrection?
Truly, God is Possessor of Grace to humanity,
but most of them give not thanks. (10:60)

COMMENTARY°

While we are still following this question and answer, the chapter suddenly takes us deep into the time when people are made to account for their deeds and their fate is determined. First a supposition is made: *And if there would be for every person who did wrong whatever is in or on the earth, he would, certainly, offer it for his ransom.* (10:54)

But such a ransom will not be accepted, even should it be offered. But before the sign is concluded, we see that what was supposed has come to pass and the whole matter is done and finished with: *And they would keep secret their self-reproach when they considered the punishment.* (10:54) It has all come as a great surprise which leaves them powerless. The image here is one of gloomy faces, full of sadness, their lips unable to utter a word: *But it will be decided*

between them with equity. And they, they will not be wronged. (10:54) The whole scene which started only half a sign earlier as a supposed probability is concluded as a reality and a foregone conclusion. This is an example of how the Quran paints impressive scenes that penetrate into our consciousness.

To emphasize the concept of resurrection and reckoning the chapter gives us yet another image of God's power as it appears in the heavens and the earth, life and death. It is a quick scene serving to reassert that what God promises will come to pass. This is followed by an appeal to all humanity to make the best use of, and receive the maximum benefit from the Quran, which brings them an admonition, guidance and a cure for all that their hearts may harbour: (10:55)

The signs take us first into the unfathomable reaches of the world beyond, stretching into time and place, as well as the past, present and future and into what takes place both in this life and in our imagination: *Say: Considered you from what God caused to descend for you of provision and that you made some of it unlawful and some lawful?* (10:59)

These are nothing less than an assault on God's authority whereby He makes things lawful or unlawful. (10:59-10:60)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 10:54-10:60

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quranic message tells the Prophet to say: In the grace of God and His mercy, therein let them be glad. That is better than what they gather. Say: Have you considered from what God caused to descent for you of provision that you made some of it unlawful and some lawful? Say: Did God give permission to you or are you devising against God? And what is the opinion of those who devise a lie against God on the Day of Resurrection? Truly God is Possessor of Grace to humanity, but most of them do not give thanks.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

Whoever did wrong in this life would want to give as ransom for his or her wrong deeds whatever is in and on the earth. They would hide their self-reproach, but it will be decided between them with equity. They will not be wronged. Everything in the heavens and the earth belongs to God. The promise of God is undoubtedly true. He gives life and causes to die and to Him will be the return. O humanity! An admonishment drew near you from your Lord and a healing for what is in the breasts and a guidance and mercy for ones who believe.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions,** (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
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4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quran is an healing, a guidance and a mercy for humanity. Is the Quran a healing? The Quran is an admonishment and a healing and a guidance and mercy for ones who believe. Turn to the Quran for guidance and mercy and as a healer for ones who believe. The Quran brings mercy and is a guidance for ones who believe. Those who believe turn to the Quran for mercy and guidance. The Quran is a mercy and guidance.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to relate the content of the above signs to practical situations in my life.

I knew that I had connected the Quranic message when I was able to tell someone in my own words what this sign says.

Lesson 51(7). Critical Thinking Intellectual Standard Definitiveness

Definitiveness means to be conclusive, final, ultimate, precise: (*muhkama*). Definitive indicates that something is exact and accurate. It is an important aspect of Quranic critical thinking. It is part of strategies such as clarifying issues, conclusions, or beliefs and clarifying and analyzing the meanings of words and phrases. Not only is definitive a standard to be used when analyzing the Quranic message, but in expressing the Quranic message as well. That is, precision of expression is implied in the above strategies and forms an important part of reasoned dialogue and dialectic.

Quranic Chapter 10: Jonah (Yunus)
Signs 10:61-10:70

Makkah: *Neither have **you** been on any matter*
*nor have **you** recounted from the Recitation*
nor are you doing any action
but We had been ones who bear witness over you
when you press on it.
*And nothing escapes from **your** Lord*
of the weight of an atom in or on the earth
nor in the heaven nor what is smaller than that nor what is greater
than that but it is in a clear Book. (10:61)
No doubt with the faithful friends of God
there will be neither fear in them
nor will they feel remorse. (10:62)
Those who believed and had been God-conscious, (10:63)
for them are good tidings in this present life
and in the world to come.
There is no substitution of the Words of God.
That, it is the winning the sublime triumph. (10:64)
*And let not their saying dishearten **you.***
Truly, all great glory belongs to God.
He is The Hearing, The Knowing. (10:65)
No doubt to God belongs whatever is in the heavens
and whatever is in and on the earth.
And follow not those who call to ascribed associates
other than God.
They follow nothing but opinion
and they do nothing but guess. (10:66)
It is He Who made the nighttime for you so that you rest in it
and the daytime for one who perceives.
Truly, in this are signs for a folk who hear. (10:67)

They said God took to Himself a son.
Glory be to Him. He is Sufficient.
To Him is whatever is in the heavens and in and on the earth.
With you there is no authority for this.
Say you against God what you know not? (10:68)
Say: Truly, those who devise lies against God,
they will not prosper, (10:69)
only an enjoyment in the present!
Again, to Us will be their return.
Again, We will cause them to experience
the severe punishment because they had been ungrateful. (10:70)

COMMENTARY°

The first sign in this passage reminds us that God is with us in all situations. (10:61) It is a feeling that brings reassurance and awe at the same time. For how is it that God is with us, witnessing whatever we do? (10:62-10:64)

Those whom the chapter describes as being close to God are the true believers who are God-fearing. Faith is something that penetrates deep into the heart and to which credit is given by action, which, in turn means the implementation of God's commandments. This is how the concept of being close to God should be understood: *And let not their saying dishearten you. Truly, all great glory belongs to God. He is The Hearing, The Knowing.* (10:65)

Everyone in the heavens and the earth, whether human, jinn or angels, obedient or disobedient, are subject to His power: *No doubt to God belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in and on the earth.* (10:66) The reference here is to animate creatures in order to emphasize that all of them, weak or strong, are under God's control. Those presumed partners have no real partnership of any kind with God. Indeed those who claim them to be God's partners are uncertain of their claims: *And follow not those who call to ascribed associates other than God. They follow nothing but opinion and they do nothing but guess.* (10:66)

This is followed by a statement portraying some aspects of God's power as reflected in the universe. These aspects are often overlooked because of familiarity: *It is He Who made the nighttime for you so that you rest in it and the daytime for one who perceives.* (10:67) The One who controls all stillness and movement, who makes the night a time for rest, and gives he day its light, enabling people to act and see, has absolute control over all people. Therefore, He is able to protect those who are close to Him: *Truly, in this are signs for a folk who hear.* (10:67) They do not stop at the mere lis-

tening, but they also reflect and contemplate.

They are then brought face to face with the reality which shows that they have no proof to support their claims. The Quranic sign uses the term 'sultan' which means authority, in place of 'evidence' because authority provides strength, and the one who has a proof to support his claim is in a position of strength: *They said God took to Himself a son. Glory be to Him. He is Sufficient. To Him is whatever is in the heavens and in and on the earth. With you there is no authority for this. Say you against God what you know not?* (10:68)

They will have no prosperity whatsoever, whether in this life or in the life to come. *Say: Truly, those who devise lies against God, they will not prosper,* (10:69) True success is that which results from leading a life that is consistent with the laws God has set in operation. These lead to all goodness, elevating human beings to a higher level of humanity and setting their social structure on the right basis. Prosperity is not limited to material progress. Such progress is only superficial and temporary if it is combined with the destruction of human values, replacing them with animal values.

Their enjoyment is brief and temporary. *Only an enjoyment in the present! Again, to Us will be their return. Again, We will cause them to experience the severe punishment because they had been ungrateful.* (10:70) It has no permanent link with the enjoyment reserved for the hereafter. Indeed, it is followed by 'severe torment' for turning away from the laws of nature which God has devised.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 10:61-10:70

WHO IS GOD?

It is God who makes the nighttime for rest and the daytime for one who perceives. They said: God took to Himself a son. Glory be to Him. He is Sufficient. To Him is whatever is in the heavens and in and on the earth. With you,humanity, there is no authority. There is no substitution in the Words of God.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

We bear witness to you, Muhammad, over any matter and the recitation that you recount and any action that you do. Nothing escapes from your Lord, Muhammad, of the weight of an atom in or on the earth nor in the heaven nor what is smaller than that nor what is greater than that but it is in a clear Book. Let not their saying dishearten you, Muhammad. All great glory belongs to God. Say: Those who devise lies against God, they will not prosper. They will only have an enjoyment in the present, but to Us is their return. We will cause them to experience the severe punishment because they had been ungrateful.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

With the faithful friends of God there will be neither fear nor remorse. Those who believed and been God-conscious, for them are good tidings in the present life and in the world to come. Do not follow those who call to ascribed associates other than God. They follow nothing but opinion. They do nothing but guess.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message states: There is no substitution in the Words of God. Can someone substitute for the Words of God? The Quran clearly states that there is no substitution for the Words of God. There is no substituting the Words of God. The Words of God are The Truth. There is no substitution for The Truth. The Quran is the Word of God.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I looked for inter-connections between these various Quranic signs.
I realized the inter-connectness of ideas in these signs.
I did not memorize the signs and repeat them like a parrot does, but I studied them as a detective would, relating new things I learned to things that I previously knew.

LESSON 51(8). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL STANDARD CONNECTING COMPLEXITIES AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS

To connect complexities and interrelationships is an intellectual standard for critical thinking. This relates to the complexities and interrelationships between and among the Quranic verses. They require you to think beneath the surface of what the section or sign is saying. Exploring the Quranic message in the classroom depends on the quality of commitment of you and your classmates to develop your ability to discern the depth of what you are studying.

QURANIC CHAPTER 10: JONAH (YUNUS)
SIGNS 10:71-10:82 NOAH AND MOSES

Makkah: Book 25: Noah (10:71)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (10:72)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (10:73)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (10:74)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Aaron (10:75)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Aaron (10:76)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Aaron (10:77)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Aaron (10:78)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Aaron (10:79)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Aaron (10:80)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Aaron (10:81)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Aaron (10:82)

QURANIC CHAPTER 10: JONAH (YUNUS)
SIGNS 10:83-10:92 MOSES

Makkah: Book 27: Moses (10:83)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (10:84)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (10:85)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (10:86)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (10:87)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (10:88)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (10:89)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (10:90)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (10:91)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (10:92)

QURANIC CHAPTER 10: JONAH (YUNUS)
SIGNS 10:93-10:103

Makkah: Book : Children of Jacob (10:93)
Madinah: (10:94)

Madinah: (10:95)
Madinah: (10:96)
Makkah: Book 28: Jonah (10:97)
Makkah: Book 28: Jonah (10:98)
And if your Lord willed, all would have believed
who are on the earth altogether.
So would you compel humanity
against their will until they become ones who believe? (10:99)
And it would not have been for any person to believe
but by the permission of God.
And He lays disgrace on those who are not reasonable. (10:100)
Say: Look on what is in the heavens and the earth.
And neither the signs nor the warning
avail a folk who believe not. (10:101)
So wait they awhile but like in the days
of those who passed away before them?
Say: So wait awhile. I am with you among
the ones waiting awhile! (10:102)
Again, We rescue Our Messengers and those who believed.
Thus, it is an obligation upon Us to deliver
the ones who believe. (10:103)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 10:99-10:103

WHO IS GOD?

All would have believed if God had so willed. It is an obligation upon God to deliver the ones who believe. A person believes only by God's permission. God lays disgrace upon those who are not reasonable.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

Would you compel humanity to believe against their will?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I thought about the depth of interrelationships as expressed in this sign between God, the Messenger and the believers.
I was able to explain the main points of the sign to another student.

LESSON 51(9). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL STANDARD APPROPRIATENESS

Appropriateness means bearing upon or relating to the matter at hand, that is understanding the Quranic message. It implies a close logical relationship with, and importance to, what the Quran is revealing. Its relevance and validity of information helps in structuring problems and solving them. The appropriateness of the Quran's message has been clear for over 1400 years as it is the model which the believers follow.

It is not the effort that you put into this Quranic Studies that is evaluated, but the quality of your learning. Quranic appropriateness connects to its teaching you how to think. Once you have assessed the issues, concepts and information relevant to the particular sign or signs, your thinking will be focused on the task, question or problem related from the sign or signs.

The Quranic message conforms to the principles of good reasoning. It is sensible and teaches good judgment through its consistent, logical, complete, relevant and appropriate arguments on issues that are important to human life. Being sensitive with an ability to judge appropriateness is only developed with continuous practice, practice in distinguishing the relevant from the irrelevant, by evaluating what is appropriate and by arguing for and against the appropriateness of facts.

QURANIC CHAPTER 10: JONAH (YUNUS)
SIGNS 10:104-10:109

Makkah: *Say: O humanity!*
If you were in uncertainty as to my way of life,
then, I will not worship those whom you worship other than God.
Rather, I worship only God Who will call you to Himself.
And I was commanded that I be
among the ones who believe (10:104)
*and that: Set **you** your face to the way of life of a monotheist.*
*And be **you** not among the ones who are polytheists.* (10:105)
*And call not to other than God what neither profits nor hurts **you***
*And if **you** were to accomplish that, truly, **you** would be*
among the ones who are unjust. (10:106)
*And if God afflicts **you** with harm,*
there is no one who removes it but He.
*And if He wants good for **you**, there is no one*
who repels His grace.
It lights on whomever He wills of His servants.
And He is The Forgiving, The Compassionate. (10:107)
Say: O humanity! Surely, The Truth drew near you from your Lord

so whoever was truly guided, then, he is only truly guided
for his own self.
And whoever went astray, then, he only goes astray
to his own loss.
And I am not a trustee over you. (10:108)
*And follow **you** what is revealed to **you**.*
*And have **you** patience until God gives judgment.*
And He is Best of the ones who judge. (10:109)

COMMENTARY°

In this its final passage, the signs bring to an end for now of our journey of the universe, and reflection on aspects of human constitution, and the realms of feeling and thought. It is as if we are returning home with a wealth of riches, as also looking for relaxation after a long journey. The signs have dwelt on the central theme of faith with its main issues: the Oneness of God, Who has no partners and Who admits no mediation or mediators; His absolute sovereignty and overpowering will; the laws He has set in operation which no one can amend or change; the truth of revelation which makes the true faith clear to all; the resurrection and the reckoning and reward on the Day of Judgment. All these issues have been clarified with historical accounts and illustrated with fine examples and analogies. Now they are summed up in a short passage. The Prophet is instructed to declare these principles to humanity, making clear that he will continue along the line he has followed until God has judged between him and those who oppose him. He is indeed the best of all judges.

PERSEVERANCE UNTIL FINAL JUDGEMENT

Say: O humanity! If you were in uncertainty as to my way of life, then, I will not worship those whom you worship other than God. (10:104) Here the Prophet is told to address all humanity, although the address is meant in the first instance to the Arabs in Makkah who believed in a multiplicity of deities. He tells them that if they are in doubt about the truth of the faith to which he is calling, then their doubts will never turn him away from the truth which he is preaching. He is not going to change his way so as to worship their false gods.

Instead, *rather, I worship only God Who will call you to Himself.* (sign 104) He is the One who determines everyone's span of life and the time when everyone dies. Emphasizing this aspect here is significant because it reminds them of God's power over them. He is the One to be worshipped, not those false deities which cannot give life

or cause death. He is also told to make his own instructions plain to them: *And I was commanded that I be among the ones who believe.* (10:104) He fulfils his orders as they are given to him, without going beyond his limits.

Set you your face to the way of life of a monotheist. (10:105) Here the style changes into a direct order, which is given in such a way that it sounds as if it is being given now in front of them all. This is far more effective. *Set you your face to the way of life of a monotheist.* turning to God alone and accepting what He has revealed to you as the complete truth. *And be you not among the ones who are polytheists.* (10:105) This re-emphasizes the meaning of sincere and exclusive following to the true faith and being one of the believers. The emphasis takes the form of a direct prohibition of associating partners with God which follows a direct order to believe. *And call not to other than God what neither profits nor hurts you. And if you were to accomplish that, truly, you would be among the ones who are unjust.* (10:106) Do not appeal to any of those beings whom the ungrateful associate with God, for they cannot bring you any benefit or cause you any harm. If you do appeal to them, you will put yourself among the wrongdoers, because God is fair to all, and He does not show any favoritism to anyone.

And if God afflicts you with harm, there is no one who removes it but He. And if He wants good for you, there is no one who repels His grace. It lights on whomever He wills of His servants. (sign 107) God has set certain laws in operation whereby harm and benefit inevitably affect human beings when they expose themselves to their causes. So if harm afflicts you through the operation of God"s laws, then no one can remove that harm unless you follow the right course of action. This means that you should cease to expose yourself to the causes of harm if you are aware of them or appeal to God to make them known to you if you do not know them.

Similarly, if you follow His laws which generate benefit for you, no one will be able to stop that benefit. It will always be granted by God to those of His servants who decide to follow the means to achieve it. This is His general will and modus operandi. Furthermore: *And He is The Forgiving, The Compassionate.* (10:107) He forgives past sins when one sincerely repents. Furthermore, He is merciful to His servants, forgiving them their errors and increasing their reward for their good deeds when they adhere to the true path.

This brings us to the final declaration to all people: *Say: O humanity! Surely, The Truth drew near you from your Lord so whoever was truly guided, then, he is only truly guided for his own self.* (10:108) It is the final, decisive word which makes it clear that every-

one chooses his or her way as they please after the truth has been given to all by their Lord.

Therefore, *And whoever went astray, then, he only goes astray to his own loss. And I am not a trustee over you.* (sign 108) The Prophet is not required to force people to follow divine guidance. He only conveys to them his message and leaves them to choose freely, making it clear that everyone will bear the results of his or her choice.

The final address to the Prophet tells him to follow what he has been instructed and to persevere until God has made His judgement: *And follow you what is revealed to you. And have you patience until God gives judgment. And He is Best of the ones who judge.* (10:109) The conclusion is in perfect harmony with the opening of the chapter and its contents, following the unique method of the Quran.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 10:104-10:109

WHO IS GOD?

He is the best of the ones who judge.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

This is the sum of faith, as illustrated in this chapter. The Prophet is ordered to declare it to humanity, and the order is given to him as though he is standing in front of them. The order is directed at each individual in person. It is a remarkably inspiring and effective method. The Prophet makes his declaration, facing up to material power, numerical strength, ignorant beliefs and a long history of associating partners with God. He makes his declaration, as commanded by God, with force and maximum clarity, when he has only a small number of followers in Makkah where the power is decidedly with the ungrateful. Thus he fulfills his duty towards the truth he is advocating, showing his unshakeable certainty in faith.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret**

the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quran says: Set your life to the way of a monotheist. Who is a monotheist? A monotheist is someone who worships the One God. There is no god but God. The Oneness of God. If there was more than One God, there would be chaos in the universe as each god vied with the other for control. There is no god, but God.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I understood how to relate what I was saying to the question at hand.
I did not have a problem sticking to the issue of relevance.
I was able to distinguish information that related to the problem of relevance from information that did not relate to it.

52(1). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL STANDARD
WORTHINESS

Sufficiently great or import to be worthy of attention.

QURANIC CHAPTER 11: HUD (HUD)
SIGNS 11:1-11:18

Makkah: *Alif Lam Ra.*
A Book, the signs in it were set clear.
Again, they were explained distinctly
from that which proceeds from the Presence
of the Wise, Aware, (11:1)
that you not worship any but God.
Truly, I am a warner to you from Him
and a bearer of good tidings (11:2)
and that: Ask for forgiveness from your Lord.
Again, repent to Him that He give you fairer enjoyment for a term
that which is determined.
He gives His grace to every possessor of grace.
And if they turn away,
I fear for you the punishment of a Great Day. (11:3)
To God is your return.
And He is Powerful over everything. (11:4)
But they fold up their breasts
that they conceal themselves from Him.
No doubt at the time when they cover themselves
with their garments,
He knows what they keep secret and what they speak openly.
Truly, He is Knowing of what is in their breasts. (11:5)
And there is no moving creature on earth
but its provision is from God.
And He knows its appointed time and its repository.
All is in a clear Book. (11:6)
And it is He Who created the heavens and the earth in six days.
And His Throne had been upon the waters that He try you
—which of you is fairer in actions.
*And if **you** were to say to them:*
Truly, you are ones who will be raised up after death.
Those who were ungrateful would be sure to say:
This is nothing but clear sorcery. (11:7)
If We postponed the punishment for them for a period of time,
that which is numbered, they will, surely, say: What detains it?
Certainly, the day it approaches them,

there is not of that which will be turned away from them
and surrounded them was what
they had been ridiculing of it. (11:8)

COMMENTARY°

The four opening signs: (11:1-11:4) set out the main fundamental principles of the Quran: Confirmation of the facts of revelation and the divine message; submission to God alone who has no partners; God's reward in this life and in the hereafter to those who follow His guidance and implement His code of living; his punishment in the hereafter of those who disbelieve, and the fact that all creatures, believers and the ungrateful alike, will ultimately return to God; His absolute power and limitless authority.

DETAILED ANALYSIS

A Book, the signs in it were set clear. (11:1) The Arabic term which is rendered in translation as have been perfected also denotes firmness of structure and precision of meaning. Every word, every phrase is used carefully to deliver exactly the required meaning. There is no conflict or contradiction between its signs which are all distinctly spelled out. Each is used at its right place, under a proper heading, in order to impart a precise meaning.

Obviously the one who has so firmly perfected them, and distinctly spelled them out, is not the Messenger; he is God: (11:1) His wisdom helps to mold their firm structure, and His comprehensive knowledge helps to give clarity to their detail. Furthermore, they come from Him directly, as delivered to His Messenger, without any distortion or alteration.

But what do they tell us? First, an outline of the basics of faith: *That you not worship any but God.* signifies that we should submit our "self" only to God, and obey none but Him.

Truly, I am a warner to you from Him and a bearer of good tidings. (11:2) This refers to the message and its dual purpose.

And that: Ask for forgiveness from your Lord. (11:3) Whenever a sin is committed, it must be followed by a return to God and submission to Him. *Again, repent to Him that He give you fairer enjoyment for a term that which is determined.* (11:3) Good reward then awaits those who repent and seek forgiveness. *He gives His grace to every possessor of grace.* (11:3) This is a self-evident threat to those who turn away: *And if they turn away, I fear for you the punishment of a Great Day.* (11:3) Finally, the return to God who has absolute power: *o God is your return. And He is Powerful over everything.* (11:4)

The promised reward is certain to come: *Again, repent to Him that He give you fairer enjoyment for a term that which is determined.* (11:3)

He gives His grace to every possessor of grace. (11:3) Some commentators are of the view that this applies to the hereafter. However, it is probably more general, making it applicable to both this life and the life to come. But we need to look at it in the same way as we explained what "goodly enjoyment" in this present life means, because, in this sense, it is achievable in all situations.

And if they turn away, I fear for you the punishment of a Great Day. (11:3) This refers to the punishment meted out on the Day of Judgment. This sense is reinforced by the next sign: *To God is your return.* (11:4) Returning to God occurs in this world and the next, at every moment and in all situations. However, Quranic usage confirms that when such an expression is used, it means the return that comes after this life is over.

And He is Powerful over everything. (11:4) This again reinforces the meaning we have outlined, because stating that God has power over all things fits in with the concept of resurrection which the ungrateful found too difficult to accept.

HIDING AWAY FROM GOD

Having thus given a brief outline of what the Quran, the book with perfected and clearly spelled-out signs, contains, the chapter goes on to describe how some of them receive these signs when they are read to them by God"s Messenger. It describes the physical movements they make, hanging their heads down and covering their breasts to hide from God. It tells them of the absurdity of such action when God sees them even in their most private situations, and is fully aware of every move made by every creature on earth. (11:6)

It shows what the ungrateful did when the Prophet tried to recite to them God's revelations. They covered their breasts and hung their heads down in order to hide from God, even though they felt, in the depth of their hearts, that He was the originator of this revelation. This they intimated on more than one occasion. The same sign shows how futile such action is. God, who sent down this revelation, is watching them as they hide and as they come out of hiding. In the inimitable style of the Quran this meaning is presented in an awesome personal and private situation. When they go to bed, alone, in the darkness of the night, with all their clothes and covers on, God remains with them. He sees what takes place in such a private situation, and He has power over them in this condition, as well as in any other condition: *No doubt at the time when they cover themselves*

with their garments. (11:5)

Truly, He is Knowing of what is in their breasts. (11:5) He is, indeed, aware of the secrets people keep closely guarded. They are well hidden in people"s breasts and kept there permanently. For this reason they are described in the Arabic original as belonging to the bosom, as if they were inseparable. They are, nevertheless, known to God, who is well aware of every action, whisper and movement.

And there is no moving creature on earth but its provision is from God. And He knows its appointed time and its repository. All is in a clear Book. (11:6) This is another example of God's knowledge which encompasses everything. All the creatures which live on earth; every human being and every animal, whether it walks, flies, crawls or creeps; and every creature which lives underneath the soil or in the depths of the sea is known to God. He it is who provides them with sustenance and He knows where each one of them abides and where it lies down, where it comes and where it goes. Each single one of them is part of His very detailed knowledge.

MATCHING SCIENCE WITH THE QURAN

The signs moves ahead by giving people a clearer idea of their true Lord, drawing their attention to the fact that He has created the heavens and the earth according to a certain system, with well-defined stages, to serve a definite purpose. It points out certain mani festations of God's power and wisdom which fit well with the them of resurrection and reckoning, action and reward: (11:7)

The sign speaks of the creation of the heavens and the earth in six days, which we discussed when commenting on 10:3. This creation is mentioned here in order to establish that there is a definite link between the system which holds the universe together and the system that regulates human life: *That He try you—which of you is fairer in actions.* (11:7)

Let us now reflect on this sign from the proper point of view, that is, faith and life: *And it is He Who created the heavens and the earth in six days. And His Throne had been upon the waters.* (11:7)

He has created the heavens and the earth in six days. There are several points not expressly stated here, but referred to later in the chapter. He has created them in this span of time to make them suitable for the emergence of human life. He has also created we human beings and made the earth and part of the heavens subject to His will. He Himself exercises His power over the whole universe: *that He try you—which of you is fairer in actions.* (11:7) Here, the text seems to make the creation of the heavens and the earth in six days, coupled with the fact that God has power over the whole universe, a test for

us. This adds to the seriousness of the test and makes us feel our own importance.

Denial of the resurrection and the reckoning and the handing out of rewards sounds very strange in this context. When it is stated that testing people is linked with the creation of the heavens and the earth and is essential to this universal system and the laws of existence, those who deny it sound both absurd and totally unaware of the major facts of the creation of this universe. For this reason they are surprised and stunned by these facts: *Truly, you are ones who will be raised up after death. Those who were ungrateful would be sure to say: This is nothing but clear sorcery.* (11:7)

What a strange claim. How false it sounds in the light of the preceding Quranic statement!

THE HUMAN BEING IN DIFFERENT MOODS

In their denial of the Day of Judgment, the ungrateful are seen to be totally unaware of its close relation to the law that governs the whole universe. They demonstrate the same ignorance concerning punishment in this life. They question the fact that they have not already been overtaken by suffering and punishment. They wonder at the delay: (11:8)

Certainly, the day it approaches them, there is not of that which will be turned away from them and surrounded them was what they had been ridiculing of it. (11:8) A believer, indeed anyone who takes a serious view of things, does not ask for God"s punishment to be hastened. Such people know that if punishment is deferred, such deferment is as a result of God"s compassion and wisdom, so that those who are more responsive to faith may eventually accept it. Indeed in the period during which God chose not to inflict overwhelming punishment on the Quraysh ungrateful many of them adopted the Quranic message and served it well afterwards.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 11:1-11:18

WHO IS GOD?

He gives His grace to every possessor of grace.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Prophet says: I am a warner to you from Him and a bearer of good tidings: As forgiveness from your Lord. Repent to Him that He give you fairer enjoyment for a determined term. If the ungrateful turn away: I fear for you the punishment of a Great Day. To God is your return. If you, Muhammad, were to say to them: you are ones who will be raised up after death, the ungrateful would say that this is sorcery.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The ungrateful say to speak of the Great Day is clear sorcery. If God postponed the punishment for them, they would say: What detains it? They will be surrounded on that Day by what they had been ridiculing.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

According to the Quranic message, the Messenger is a warner and a bearer of good news from God. What is the job of a Messenger of God? To warn of the end of time and to give good news to those who believe. Those who believe are those who have heeded the warning and receive the good news. One has a choice between accepting the warning or not. Those who accept the warning and believe the Day will come, receive good news. The Day will come.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I am frequently able to explain this to someone.
I know that if I cannot explain this sign to someone else, it shows that I have not learned them well enough.

LESSON 52(2). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL STANDARD NUMEROUS OR MULTIPLE VIEWPOINTS

In terms of critical thinking, numerous as an intellectual standard means involving multiple viewpoints: In the Quranic context, there are the many viewpoints presented: those of the ones who are believers, the ones who are ungrateful, the ones who are doers of good, the ones who are wrongdoers, and so forth.

The Quran presents multiple viewpoints and indicates a wide-ranging and broad-minded perspective. Its reasoning is clear, accurate precise, relevant and deep along with a breadth of multiple points of view. Thinking in terms of multiple viewpoints requires insightful thinking.

QURANIC CHAPTER 11: HUD (HUD)
SIGNS 11:9-11:24

Makkah: *And if We caused the human being*
to experience mercy from Us,
then, again, We tear it out from him,
truly, he is hopeless, ungrateful. (11:9)
And if We caused him to experience favor
after tribulation afflicted him,
he is certain to say: Evil deeds went from me!
Truly, he becomes glad, boastful. (11:10)
But those who endured patiently
and did as the ones in accord with morality,
those, for them is forgiveness
and a great compensation. (11:11)

Madinah (11:12)

Makkah: *Say: Approach you, then, with ten chapters*
of the Quran like it, that which is forged,
and call to whomever you were able
other than God if you had been ones who are sincere. (11:13)
If they respond not to you, then,
know that it was only caused to descend by the knowledge of God
and that there is no god but He.
Are you, you, then, ones who submit to God? (11:14)
Whoever had been wanting this present life and its adornment,
We pay their account in full to them for their actions in it.
And they will not be diminished in it. (11:15)
Those are those for whom there is nothing
in the world to come but fire.
And what they crafted here was fruitless.
And what they had been doing is in vain. (11:16)

Madinah (11:17)
Makkah: *Who does greater wrong*
than he who devised a lie against God?
Those will be presented before their Lord.
And the ones who bear witness will say:
These are those who lied against their Lord.
But the curse of God is upon the ones who are unjust— (11:18)
they who bar from the way of God and desire in it crookedness.
And they, in the world to come,
they are ones who disbelieve. (11:19)
Those will not be ones who frustrate Him on the earth,
nor had there been for them—other than God—any protectors.
The punishment is multiplied for them.
Not had they been able to have the ability to hear,
nor had they been perceiving. (11:20)
Those are those who lost their souls.
What they had been devising had gone astray. (11:21)
Without a doubt they in the world to come,
they are the ones who are losers. (11:22)
Truly, those who believed
and did as the ones in accord with morality
and humbled themselves before their Lord,
those will be the Companions of the Garden.
They, ones who will dwell in it forever. (11:23)
The parable of the two groups of people
is as the one unwilling to see, unwilling to hear
and the other, seeing and hearing.
They are not on the same level in likeness.
Will you not, then, recollect? (11:24)

COMMENTARY°

The rest of the passage describes aspects of the psychology of the human being, a remarkable creature who, without faith, remains short-sighted, inconsistent and vacillating: (11:9-11:11)

But those who endured patiently. (11:11) Such people remain steadfast when they enjoy ease and plenty and when they endure adversity. Many people may be too proud to show weakness when they suffer any hardship. But few indeed are those who do not give themselves airs when they enjoy bliss and affluence.

And did as the ones in accord with morality in both situations. *Those, for them is forgiveness and a great compensation* for their commendable attitude in both situations. A serious view of faith, manifested in God-conscious deeds, is the only thing that protects us

from despair during hardship and from arrogance during times of ease and plenty. It is the only factor which helps many adopt a consistent attitude in both situations. With faith we feel our link with God. We are thus not overwhelmed by adversity. Nor are we proud and insolent when we enjoy abundance. To a believer both situations are beneficial. As the Prophet says: Only a believer derives benefit from both situations.

A CHALLENGE NEVER TO BE MET

The ungrateful often claimed that the Quran was a forgery, invented by the Prophet. Here, he is instructed to challenge them to produce ten chapters similar to the Quran, and to that end, they are able to seek the help of whomever they like: *Or they say: He devised it. Say: Approach you, then, with ten chapters of the Quran like it, that which is forged.* (11:12-11:13) The same sort of challenge occurs in the preceding chapter, Jonah, but there they are only challenged to produce one chapter like the Quran. So why are they now challenged to produce ten chapters?

And call to whomever you were able other than God if you had been ones who are sincere. (11:13) The challenge included anyone they cared to call to their aid: their deities whom they claimed to be God's partners, their finest poets as well as those among them who were endowed with the best literary talents. All they had to do to prove their allegation that the Quran was invented, was produce ten chapters like those of the Quran.

But all the help you seek will produce nothing. So, *if they respond not to you* then it should be enough for you to come to know the truth of revelation: *Know that it was only caused to descend by the knowledge of God* (11:14) He alone has the ability to bestow the Quran. Only His knowledge could have produced it the way it is. They must also realize *there is no god but He.* (11:14) This is the net result of the inability of their gods to help compose ten chapters similar to those God revealed. The self-evident conclusion then is that there is only one God who alone is able to reveal such a Scripture.

Having stated this fact, which does not admit any contradiction, the sign concludes with a question which allows for only one answer, unless it be by those who stubbornly refuse to admit the obvious. The question is *Are you, you, then, ones who submit to God?* (11:14)

Despite their failure to meet the challenge, their stubborn rejection of the self- evident truth continued. Their rejection was motivated by their unwillingness to relinquish their privileges in this life. They had the wealth and power to subjugate and deprive others of a chance to respond to the call of freedom, dignity and justice, the call

to believe that there is no deity but God. Therefore, the following sign describes their true situation and their inevitable destiny: (11:15-11:16)

We see all around us people, individuals and communities, whose aspirations do not go beyond this world, and who actually have abundant enjoyment. We need not wonder about and question this. For this is the rule God has established for this life: *Whoever had been wanting this present life and its adornment, We pay their account in full to them for their actions in it.* (11:15-11:24)

These signs with varying rhythm and a multitude of pointers and references, give us an impression of what the small group of early believers faced during that critical period of the Quranic message. It tells us that the situation needed to be clearly defined and faced with positive action.

THE GREATEST LOSERS

To invent any lie is to commit a terrible crime against truth and against the person concerned. How much more terrible the crime becomes then when the lies are fabricated against God? The culprits then: *Those will be presented before their Lord. And the ones who bear witness will say: These are those who lied against their Lord.* (11:18) It is a scene where their crime is publicized and they are disgraced. They are singularly pointed out and everyone is made aware that their lies were *against their Lord.* (11:18). The scene carries an air of lying, and is followed by a suitably appropriate curse: *But the curse of God is upon the ones who are unjust.* (11:18)

This curse is invoked by the witnesses, who are the angels, th messengers and the believers, or probably, all humanity. Thus, hu miliation awaits them on that vast stage where they are brought to account. Or, perhaps, it is God"s final decision in their case along with the humiliation and the disgrace which they are made to endure in front of all people. In this case it should be read not as an invocation, but as a statement of fact: *But the curse of God is upon the ones who are unjust.* The unjust are those who associate partners with God and who fabricate lies against Him in order to debar others from His path.

They who bar from the way of God and desire in it crookedness (11:19) They do not wish to act with honesty and sincerity. They do not like to behave in a straightforward manner. They prefer crookedness and deviousness. The pronoun "it" used here refers to either the path of God or to life generally. The truth about them is emphasized, for they are those "who deny the life to come." The Arabic expression here is much more emphatic, so that the enormity of their

crime is portrayed in sharp relief.

These people, cursed and turned away are: *Those who will not be ones who frustrate Him on the earth, nor had there been for them—other than God—any protectors. The punishment is multiplied for them. Not had they been able to have the ability to hear, nor had they been perceiving.* (11:20) God is always able to punish them in this life, if He so wishes. *Nor had there been for them—other than God—any protectors* or support against God. It is, however, His will to defer their punishment to the future life, so that they will endure torment in this world and in the world to come. *The punishment is multiplied for them.* (11:20) They have wasted their senses, and lived as if they were dispossessed of their faculties of hearing and seeing: *Not had they been able to have the ability to hear, nor had they been perceiving.* (11:20) *Those are those who lost their souls.* (11:21)

This is indeed the most terrible loss. For he who has lost his own soul cannot benefit from anything he gains in its place. These people have wasted their lives. They could not appreciate their dignity which is best fulfilled by lifting themselves above submission to anyone other than God. They incurred their loss when they denied the hereafter and fabricated lies against their Lord with the expectation that they would never meet Him. In the life to come they will find that they have lost their souls. *What they had been devising had gone astray.* (11:21) Their fabrications will go amiss. They cannot find the lies they invented against God. They will all disappear. *Without a doubt they in the world to come, they are the ones who are losers.* (11:22) What loss can be greater than theirs when they have lost their own souls both in this life and in the life to come?

Contrasted with their situation is that of those who believe and maintain good and proper action. These are reassured, have total trust in their Lord, undisturbed by any doubt or worry: *Truly, those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality and humbled themselves before their Lord, those will be the Companions of the Garden.* (11:23) The Arabic expression used for "*humbled themselves*" also denotes submission, trust and reassurance. It depicts a believer's relationship with his Lord which is one of complete satisfaction, security and freedom from all worry.

We have finally a very vivid image of each of the two groups. The first is like a person who cannot see because he is blind, and cannot hear because he is deaf. He does not put his senses and faculties to their ultimate use, serving his mind, so that he can think, reason and contemplate. He is indeed deprived of all his senses and faculties. The other group are like a person who sees and hears and is, therefore, rightly guided by his senses. *The parable of the two groups of*

people is as the one unwilling to see, unwilling to hear and the other, seeing and hearing. (11:24) This image is then followed by a rhetorical question: *They are not on the same level in likeness. Will you not, then, recollect?* (11:24) The whole issue does not require more than taking heed. It is a simple, straightforward issue.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 11:9-11:24

WHO IS GOD?

God causes human beings to experience mercy from Him. If He removes it, human beings becomes hopeless, ungrateful. If they suffer tribulation and it is removed, they become glad, boastful.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Messenger is told to say to the ungrateful who do not believe the Quranic message is from God: Approach with ten chapters like the Quran that you say is forged and call to whomever you are able for help—other than God—if you are able. If they do not respond to you, then know that the Quranic revelation was only caused to descend by the knowledge of God and that there is no god but He. Then ask: Are you ungrateful, then, ones who submit to God (*muslim*)?

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

Whoever wants this present life and its adornment will be given it. The end for them is the fire. Whatever they did here on earth is fruitless and in vain. Who does greater wrong than he who devised a lie against God? They will be presented to God by ones who bear witness who will say: These ar those who lied against their Lord. The curse of God be upon the ones who ai unjust—those who bar from the way of God. They are ones who disbelieve i the world to come. They are ones who have lost their soul. They are the losers. Those who believe and act in accord with morality and humble themselves before their Lord will be the Companions of the Garden. The parable of these two groups of people is the one who is unwilling to see, unwilling to hear and the other, seeing and hearing. They are not on the same level in likeness. Will you ungrateful not recollect?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Using Problem-Based Learning to Answer Questions

Problem based learning will provide you with opportunities to:

Examine and try out what you know
Discover what you need to learn
Develop your people skills for achieving higher performance in teams
Improve your communications skills
State and defend positions with evidence and sound argument
Become more flexible in processing information and meeting obligations
Practice skills that you will need after your education

The Quran says: The curse of God is on the unjust. Who are the unjust? The unjust are those who bar people from the way of God and who do not believe in the Day of Judgment. Not to believe in the Day of Judgment is to be unjust. Injustice is to deny the signs of God. Those who deny the signs of God will receive the punishment on that Day. The Day will come.

Write a Problem Statment

A problem statement should come from your/the group's analysis of what you know, and what you will need to know to solve it. You will need: a written statement; the agreement of your group on the statement; feedback on this statement from your instructor. (This may be optional, but is a good idea)

Lesson 52(3). Critical Thinking Intellectual Standard Right Judgment

The condition or quality of being true, correct, or exact; freedom from error or defect; precision or exactness; correctness; faithful representation of the truth.

Quranic Chapter 11: Hud (Hud)
Signs 11:25-11:35

Makkah: Book 25: Noah (11:25)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (11:26)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (11:27)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (11:28)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (11:29)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (11:30)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (11:31)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (11:32)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (11:33)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (11:34)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (11:35)

Quranic Chapter 11: Hud (Hud)
Signs 11:36-11:49

Makkah: Book 25: Noah (11:36)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (11:37)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (11:38)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (11:39)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (11:40)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (11:41)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (11:42)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (11:43)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (11:44)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (11:45)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (11:46)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (11:47)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (11:48)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (11:49)

Quranic Chapter 11: Hud (Hud)
Signs 11:50-11:60

Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (11:50)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (11:51)

Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (11:52)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (11:53)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (11:54)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (11:55)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (11:56)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (11:57)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (11:58)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (11:59)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (11:60)

QURANIC CHAPTER 11: HUD (HUD)
SIGNS 11:61-11:68

Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (11:61)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (11:62)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (11:63)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (11:64)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (11:65)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (11:66)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (11:67)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (11:68)

QURANIC CHAPTER 11: HUD (HUD)
SIGNS 11:69-11:83

Makkah: Book 26: Lot (11:69)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (11:70)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (11:71)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (11:72)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (11:73)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (11:74)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (11:75)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (11:76)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (11:78)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (11:79)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (11:80)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (11:81)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (11:82)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (11:83)

QURANIC CHAPTER 11: HUD (HUD)
SIGNS 11:84-11:95

Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb), the People of Midian (11:84)

Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb), the People of Midian (11:85)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb), the People of Midian (11:86)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb), the People of Midian (11:87)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb), the People of Midian (11:88)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb), the People of Midian (11:89)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb), the People of Midian (11:90)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb), the People of Midian (11:91)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb), the People of Midian (11:92)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb), the People of Midian (11:93)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb), the People of Midian (11:94)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb), the People of Midian (11:95)

QURANIC CHAPTER 11: HUD (HUD)
SIGNS 11:96-11:109

Makkah: Book 27: Moses, Pharaoh (11:96)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses, Pharaoh (11:97)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses, Pharaoh (11:98)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses, Pharaoh (11:99)
Makkah: *That is from the tidings of the towns*
that We relate to you.
Of them, some are ones that are standing up
and some are stubble. (11:100)
And it was not that We did wrong to them.
Rather, they did wrong themselve:
And their gods availed them n
whom they call to besides God at al
When the command of your Lord drew near
they increased them not
other than in ruination. (11:101)
And, thus, is the taking of your Lord
when He took the towns
while they are ones who are unjust.
Truly, His taking is painful, severe. (11:102)
In that, truly, there is a sign
for whoever feared the punishment of the world to come.
That Day humanity will be one that is gathered together for it
and that will be a witnessed Day. (11:103)
And We postpone it not but for the numbered term. (11:104)
On the Day it approaches no person will assert anything
but with His permission. Then, among them will be
the disappointed and the happy. (11:105)
As for those who were in despair, they will be in the fire.

For them in it is sobbing and sighing, (11:106)
ones who will dwell in it for as long as the heavens
and the earth continued,
*but what **your** Lord willed.*
*Truly, **your** Lord is Achiever of what He wants.* (11:107)
And as for those who were happy, they will be in the Garden,
ones who will dwell in it for as long
as the heavens and the earth continued,
*but what **your** Lord willed, a gift*
that will not be that which is broken. (11:108)
*So be **you** not hesitant as to what these worship.*
They worship nothing but what their fathers worship before.
And We are the ones who pay their share in full
without being that which is reduced. (11:109)

COMMENTARY°

The first comment: (11:100-11:102) directly relates to the historical accounts, and is followed by one which utilizes the punishment meted out to those early communities as a means of inspiring awe of punishment in the hereafter. This is given in a very awesome scene of the Day of Judgment, which is held out before our eyes. (11:103-11:108)

SUMMING UP PAST LESSONS

So far, the chapter has portrayed the suffering which overwhelmed various ancient nations: some were drowned in floods, some perished in a devastating storm, some by an awful cry, and some found the earth under their feet subside, opening up to swallow them and their dwellings. Then when all these scenes of destruction in this world are visible before our eyes, and when our hearts are deeply touched by what has been related of events and punishments, we have the final comment: *That is from the tidings of the towns that We relate to you.* (11:100) In other words, the Prophet, had no knowledge of any of this. He came to know of them only through divine revelation. This is indeed one of the objectives of telling such stories in the Quran.

Of them, some are ones that are standing up. (11:100) Their ruins which still exist testify to the standard of civilization and strength that these communities attained.

Of these the ruins of Aad and Tham d at are the best examples. *And some are stubble.* (11:100) They were wiped out, without a trace, as in the cases of the peoples of Noah and Lot. After all, what are people? And what is civilization? They are but fields of human be-

ings, similar to agricultural fields. Some plants are good and pleasing, others are foul. Some acquire strength and spread, others wither and die.

And it was not that We did wrong to them. Rather, they did wrong themselves. (11:101) They chose to be blind and to stifle their instincts and senses. They turned away from divine guidance, ignored God"s signs and greeted His warnings with contempt. Therefore, they brought on themselves the suffering they received, wronging themselves while no wrong was done them.

*And their gods availed them not whom they call to besides God at all. When the command of **your** Lord drew near they increased them not other than in ruination.* (11:101) This sign states another objective behind relating such historical accounts in the Quran. The chapter opened with a warning to all those who submit to deities other than God.

The same warnings were repeated by every messenger and every prophet. They were told that these false deities could not protect them from God. Their destinies confirmed the earlier warnings. When God's judgement came to pass, none of their deities could avail them of anything. None was able to spare them any portion of the suffering which befell them. Indeed, their false gods could only add to their ruin. This because when they relied on false gods, they added venom and contempt to their opposition to God"s messengers and His messages. Therefore, their punishment was even more severe. This is the meaning of the expression: *They increased them not other than in ruination.* Indeed, those deities could do them neither good nor harm. They were, however, the cause of their increased punishment.

*And, thus, is the taking of **your** Lord when He took the towns while they are ones who are unjust. Truly, His taking is painful, severe.* (11:102) It is only when a community indulges in evil that God takes it to task and brings about its destruction. Punished communities are always bent on evildoing.

Truly, His taking is painful, severe. (11:102) God leaves people to enjoy themselves for a while. He tests them and sends them messengers and clear signs. When, however, evil reigns supreme in a community, and the advocates of truth are only a minority unable to influence the majority, bent on evil-doing; when the small community of believers disassociate themselves from the rest of their people, who are persistent in error, and consider themselves to be a separate community with their own religion, leadership and loyalties; when they make all this plain to the rest of their people and leave them to their destiny, as determined by God, then God brings about His punishment of the evil-doers which is *painful, severe.*

At this point, the chapter portrays scenes from the Day of Judgement, in the familiar Quranic style which relates such scenes to scenes of this world with no gap evident between the two. (11:103-11:108)

In that, truly, there is a sign for whoever feared the punishment of the world to come. (11:103) The severe punishment meted out in this world bears some similarity to the suffering of the hereafter. Therefore, it serves as a reminder of that future suffering. Such reminders, however, are appreciated only by those who fear the punishment in the hereafter. Their fear of God awakens their hearts and opens their eyes. On the other hand, those who are heedless of the hereafter do not respond to any sign. They are blind. They do not appreciate the purpose of creation and re-creation. They only see their immediate situation in this life. Indeed, they do not learn from the lessons presented in this life.

The chapter then proceeds to describe the Day of Judgment: *That Day humanity will be one that is gathered together for it and that will be a witnessed Day.* (11:103) We have here a scene of all humanity being gathered together, leaving them no choice in the matter. They are led to the gathering place. All come forward, and everyone awaits the outcome.

On the Day it approaches no person will assert anything but with His permission. (11:105) A deadly silence continues without interruption. It is a scene full of awe, which overwhelms all. No one dares ask permission to speak. Permission, however, is given by God to whomever He chooses. At this point people are divided into two groups: *Then, among them will be the disappointed and the happy.* (11:105)

As we read on we visualize the wretched in their misery in the fire, where they moan, sigh and sob. The air there is too hot, too suffocating. We also see *the happy* in Paradise, where they receive their reward which continues uninterrupted. Both groups remain in their respective abodes, *ones who will dwell in it for as long as the heavens and the earth continued.* (11:107) This is an expression which imparts a feeling of permanence, which is indeed the intended connotation here.

That continuity is qualified in both cases by God's choice. Indeed, every situation and every law is subject to God's will. It is His will which determines the law but is yet not subject to it. His is a free-will which can change any law whenever He chooses: *But what **your** Lord willed* (sign 107).

You must not entertain any doubt about the falsehood those people followed. This address is made to the Prophet, but the warnings

are given to his people. This approach is perhaps more effective because it implies that the whole matter is something explained objectively by God to His Prophet. There is no argument with anyone. Those who offer such false worship are not directly addressed because they do not deserve to be given attention. Thus, the objective truth, in the manner it is stated, may by itself arouse their interest more than if they were to be addressed directly. *So be you not hesitant as to what these worship. They worship nothing but what their fathers worship before.* (11:109) Therefore, the same suffering awaits them. It is, however, implied here: *And We are the ones who pay their share in full without being that which is reduced.* (11:109) What is due to them is known from what befell other people before them. The chapter has portrayed some examples of this.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 11:100-11:109

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The Quranic message tells Prophet Muhammad that these are the news of the towns that the Quran reveals to him. Some are standing. Some are rubble. When the command of your Lord, Muhammad, drew near them, they increased in doing wrong. Thus, your Lord, Muhammad, took them while they were ones who were unjust. Those who were in despair will be in the fire. Your Lord, Muhammad, achieves what He wants. So do not be hesitant, Muhammad, as to what these worship.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

God did not wrong them, but they wronged themselves. They called to gods other than God. In this is a sign for whoever fears the punishment of the world to come. Humanity will gather on that Day along with witnesses. Among them will be those who are disappointed and those who are happy. Those who are happy will be in the Garden. They worship nothing but what their fathers worshiped. They will pay their share in full.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?

2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quran says that the ungrateful worship what their fathers worshipped. What did their fathers worship? Their fathers worshipped idols that they themselves named. The ungrateful refuse to change their ways, but continue to worship as their ancestors who had become idolaters worshipped. The ungrateful worship what their idolatrous fathers worshipped instead of worshipping what their monotheistic fathers had worshipped. The ungrateful will receive the punishment at the end of time. The Day will come.

How would your rate yourself in doing the following?

USING PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING TO ANSWER QUESTIONS

Problem based learning will provide you with opportunities to:

Examine and try out what you know
Discover what you need to learn
Develop your people skills for achieving higher performance in teams
Improve your communications skills
State and defend positions with evidence and sound argument
Become more flexible in processing information and meeting obligations
Practice skills that you will need after your education

WRITE A PROBLEM STATEMENT

A problem statement should come from your/the group's analysis of what you know, and what you will need to know to solve it. You will need: a written statement; the agreement of your group on the statement; feedback on this statement from your instructor. (This may be optional, but is a good idea)

LESSON 52(4). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL STANDARD CLARITY

The word "clarity" or 'to be clear (*bayan*)" occurs over two hundred times in the Quran. The Quranic message describes itself as having clarity or being clear, having clear signs, making things clear. The clarity in the Quranic message is to guide us to the distinction between truth and error. Clarity means to be understandable such that the meaning can be grasped; to be free from confusion or ambiguity, to remove obscurities. Clarity is essential as an opening or beginning or gateway standard because if a statement is unclear, it cannot determined if it is accurate or relevant. In fact, nothing can be determined about it because students may not as yet know what it means. They can only assume that we understand a thought when we can elaborate on it, illustrate it and give an example of it.

QURANIC CHAPTER 11: HUD (HUD)
SIGNS 11:110-11:123

Makkah: Book 27: Moses (11:110)
Makkah: *And, truly, to each his account*
will be paid in full
*by **your** Lord for their actions.*
Truly, He is Aware of what they do.(11:111)
*So go **you** straight as **you** were commanded*
*and those who repented with **you** and be not defiant.*
Truly, He is Seeing of what you do.(11:112)
Then, incline not to those who did wrong so the fire afflict yo
and there will not be for you any protectors other than Goc
Again, you will not be helped.(11:113)
Madinah (11:114)
Makkah: *And have **you** patience,*
for, truly, God wastes not the compensation
of the ones who are doers of good.(11:115)
Why had there not been among the generations before you
imbued with abiding wisdom,
prohibiting corruption in and on the earth,
but a few of those whom We rescue from among them?
And those who did wrong
followed what they were given ease in it.
And they had been ones who sin. (11:116)
Thy Lord had not been causing the towns to perish unjustly
while their people are ones who make things right.(11:117)
*And if **your** Lord willed,*
He would have made humanity one community.

But they cease not to be ones who are at variance, (11:118)
*but on whom **your** Lord had mercy.*
And for that, He created them, and completed
*was the Word of **your** Lord.*
Certainly, I will fill hell with genie
and humanity one and all. (11:119)
*And all that We relate to **you** of the tidings of the Messengers*
*is so that We make **your** mind firm by it.*
*And The Truth drew near **you** in this,*
and an admonishment and a reminder
for the ones who believe. (11:120)
And say to those who believe not:
Act according to your ability.
Truly, We are ones who act. (11:121)
And wait awhile.
We, too, are ones who are waiting awhile. (11:122)
And to God belongs the unseen of the heavens and the earth.
And to Him is the return of every command,
*so worship Him and put **your** trust in Him.*
*And **your** Lord is not One Who is Heedless*
of what you do. (11:123)

COMMENTARY°

Since judgment has been deferred, everyone will receive the reward due for his actions, whether good or bad, from God, who is aware of all actions.*And, truly, to each his account will be paid in full by **your** Lord for their actions. Truly, He is Aware of what they do.* (11:111) The Arabic expression employed here contains multiple emphasis, so that the delay of accountability and reward should not induce anyone to doubt their inevitability. Such varied emphasis also serves to assert that the beliefs of those people are totally false and that they are akin to the false beliefs of past communities.

A NEEDED REMINDER

The assurance is thus given that God"s laws will not fail, whether they relate to His creation, the religion He has revealed, or to His promises and warnings. Believers and advocates of the Quranic message must, therefore, follow it strictly without deviation or change. (11:112-11:115)

These instructions are given to the Prophet and to those with him who have turned to God in repentance. *So go **you** straight as **you** were commanded and those who repented with **you** and be not defiant.* (11:112) The Prophet felt the power behind the order detail-

ing these tasks and how awesome a responsibility it was. He is reported to have said: This chapter, Hud, has made me grow grey. Here, he is commanded to follow the right path without any deviation. This requires him to always be alert, careful, watchful, and aware of his path. He was to be in full control of his feelings, for these can lead to deviation, major or otherwise. (11:112)

The use of the verb "see" is very apt here, where good and sound judgement are called into action. (11:113) Do not incline towards or have any trust in tyrants who oppress others by their sheer force, making them submit to false gods. If you trust them, or incline towards them, you are endorsing the great evil they practice, and you become party to it. Such deviation would bring about the punishment of hell and leave you without God"s support or protection.

Following the right path during such times may be very hard. Indeed, believers may need to have something to comfort them. God, therefore, guides His Messenger and the believers to what gives them the greatest comfort: (11:114) God knows that this is the source of comfort when every other source fails.

The order to attend to prayers is followed by the statement that good does away with evil. This is a general statement which includes all good deeds. Prayer is one of the best deeds any person can do. Therefore, it is one of the best actions for erasing sin and error. *That is a reminder for the ones who remember.* (11:114) Prayer is, in essence, a method of remembering God, and being thoughtful of Him. Therefore, this comment is very apt here. To follow the right course and to maintain it requires patience. Similarly, awaiting the time God has set for the fulfilment of His promises and warnings requires patience. Therefore, these orders are followed by another one: *And have you patience, for, truly, God wastes not the compensation of the ones who are doers of good.* (11:115) To follow the right course is to do good; and to pray at the appointed times is to do good. Moreover, to be patient and to persevere against the ungrateful" schemes is to do good. God will certainly reward those who do good.

WHAT SAVES ERRING COMMUNITIES

If only there had been among the generations that have gone before you some people of virtue to speak out against the spread of corruption on earth, as did the few whom We saved from among them! The wrongdoers pursued what ensured for them a life of comfort and plenty; they were hardened in sin. In truth, your Lord would have not destroyed those cities, without just cause, had their people been God-conscious: (11:116-11:117)

WHY LET DIFFERENCES OCCUR

Then follows a comment on the fact that people have different inclinations and follow different ways. (11:118-11:119)

It is God's will that we are not made of a single community. Therefore, we are bound to differ. Their differences go as far as the basics of faith. Only those who are able to stick to the truth, which is one, by definition, are spared such differences. They, however, differ with the rest of us who have lost sight of the truth.

Completed was the Word of your Lord. Certainly, I will fill hell with genie and humanity one and all. (11:119) From this statement, we deduce that those who stick to the truth enjoy God's grace and have a different end. Heaven will be full of them, in the same way as hell will be full of those who preferred error to the truth.

The signs concludes with an address to the Prophet, explaining the reason behind relating to him such accounts of the histories of earlier communities. It is to strengthen his heart and to provide a reminder for all believers. To those who reject the faith, he should say his final word, indicating the parting of his way from theirs and leaving them to wait for whatever fate God decides for them: ""All that We relate to you of the histories of earlier messengers is a means by which We strengthen your heart. Through these [accounts] there has come to you the truth, as well as an admonition and a reminder for all believers. Say to those who will not believe: (11:120-11:123)

Whatever has been outlined in the chapter of the nature of the Quranic way of life and the histories of earlier prophets and messengers, and the operation of the divine laws, especially as they relate to the fulfillment of God's promises and warnings, is true beyond any shadow of a doubt. *And an admonishment and a reminder for the ones who believe.* (11:120) In such histories, the believers are warned against what befell earlier nations. They are reminded of God"s commandments and His laws.

However, those who are bent on rejecting the truth and do not believe can benefit nothing from such an admonition. There is only one attitude to take towards them, and that is a firm one indicating that there is no common ground between them and the believers. The Prophet is instructed to say to them what one of his prophet brothers, whose story is related in this chapter said to his people before leaving them to their destiny: *And say to those who believe not: Act according to your ability. Truly, We are ones who act. And wait awhile. We, too, are ones who are waiting awhile.* (11:121-11:122) What they are waiting for is known only to God:

And to God belongs the unseen of the heavens and the earth. And to Him is the return of every command. (11:123) Everything is

in His hands, including the destiny of the Prophet, the believers and the ungrateful. All power and all authority belong to Him alone. He is, then, the One who deserves to be worshipped: *So worship Him and put your trust in Him.* (11:123) He is the protector of His obedient servants and He alone can give them victory. Moreover, He is aware of everything that every person does, whether good or bad. To each and all He gives their just rewards: *And your Lord is not One Who is Heedless of what you do.* (11:123)

Thus the chapter concludes. It opened with the call to worship God alone, and to turn to Him in repentance, and concludes with the same message of submission. Worship God alone, seek His guidance and follow His instructions. In between, the chapter dwelt at length on matters which relate to the universe, the human soul and the history of nations.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 11:110-11:123

WHO IS GOD?

God will fill hell with genie and humanity. God wastes not the compensation of the ones who are doers of good. God does not take the towns unjustly while their people are ones who make things right. To God is the return of every command.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

The account of each will be paid in full by your Lord, Muhammad. So go straight as you were commanded and those who repent with you, Muhammad. Have you, Muhammad, patience. If your Lord, Muhammad, had willed He would have made humanity one community. They cease not to be at variance with each other except those on whom your Lord, Muhammad, has mercy. We relate to you, Muhammad, the tidings of Messengers so that We make your mind firm. The Truth drew near you, Muhammad, in this and an admonishment and a reminder for the ones who believe. Say to those who do not believe: Act according to your ability. We are also ones who act. And wait awhile. We too are waiting. Worship Him and put your trust in Him. Your Lord, Muhammad, is not heedless of what they do.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

Those who incline to wrong will be in the fire. They will not be helped. There were ones imbued with wisdom who prohibited corruption in and on the earth, but they were few and they were rescued. Those who did wrong had been ones who sin.

Student Assessment

Example of How Critical Thinking Works

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

Example of How Quranic Critical Thinking Works

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quran informs the ungrateful that they face a painful punishment. What does the Quranic message say here to the ungrateful? Act according to your ability and We are ones who act. Wait awhile and We, too, are waiting. The ungrateful deny the Day will come so the Quranic message tells them to act and wait and that God is also acting and waiting. God is always present. The consequences for the acts of the ungrateful who deny the signs will be reckoned with. God is waiting while the ungrateful wait.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

When I focused on clarity, I began to notice when I was being unclear in communicating with others. When I was reading, I began to notice when I was clear about what I was reading.

I focused on the four techniques of clarification:

1. Stating what I am saying explicitly and precisely (with careful consideration given to my choice of words),

2. Elaborating on my meaning in other words

3. Giving examples of what I mean from experiences I have had.

4. I used analogies, metaphors, pictures, or diagrams to illustrate what I meant.

Lesson 53. Critical Thinking Intellectual Standard Being Fair and Just

Being fair and just is described as in the Quran as having wisdom (*hikmah*). It is considered to be the ability to form judgments that are free from discrimination or dishonesty. Having wisdom in the Quranic sense is to have experience, knowledge and good or right judgment. Out of these develops a sense of impartiality so that we learn to weigh two differing points of view equally.

Developing a sense of fairness is the ability to make judgments free from discrimination or dishonesty. Having wisdom is to have experience, knowledge and good judgment. From this fair-mindedness or wisdom comes a sense of impartiality, that is, an inclination to weigh two views or opinions equally.

Being fair and just when weighing two views or opinions helps us overcome any lingering egocentricity. We may have thought that we knew the truth only to find that we were wrong. We also learn not to judge any ideas until we are familiar with them and we have fully understood them.

Thinking critically, we are able to consider both the strengths and the weaknesses of differing points of view. We learn to put ourselves in place of others in order to understand them and what they are saying. We learn to overcome our self-centered point of view of identifying truth with our immediate perceptions or long-held beliefs. We gain the ability to accurately state the viewpoints and reasoning of others. We reason from premises, assumptions and ideas that are not our own. We can recall times when we were wrong but convinced that we were right. We begin to realize that our behavior and judgments affect others so that we learn to see things from another's point of view.

An Example of the Prophet's Sense of Fairness

Despite Abu Jahl's hostility, hatred, and violence towards the Messenger, God humiliated him before him whenever he saw him. I was told by Abd al-Malik ibn Abd Allah ibn Abu Sufyan al-Thaqafi who had a good memory: A man from Irash brought some camels of his to Makkah and Abu Jahl bought them from him. He held back the money, so the man went to the assembly of Quraysh when the Messenger was sitting at the side of the mosque and said: Who among you will help me to get what is due to me from Abu a-Hakam ibn Hisham? I am a stranger, a wayfarer, and he will not pay his debt.

They said pointing to the Messenger: Do you see that man sitting there? In fact, they were making game of him for they knew quite well of the enmity between him and Abu Jahl.

Go to him. He will help you to your right.

So the man went and stood over the Messenger and said, O Servant of God, Abu al-Hakam ibn Hisham has withheld the money he

owes me. I am a stranger, a wayfarer, and I asked these men to tell me of someone who would help me to my right and they pointed to you, so get my money from him, God bless you. He said, Go to him,' and the Messenger got up and went with him. When they saw this, the men said to one of their number: Follow him.

The Messenger went to his house and knocked on the door. When he asked who was there he said: Muhammad! Come out to me. He came out to him pale with agitation, and the Messenger said: Pay this man his due.

One moment until I give him his money, he said. He went indoors and came out again with the amount he owed and paid it to the man. The Messenger went away saying: Go about your business.

The Irashite went back to the gathering and said: May God reward him, for he has got me my due.

Then the man they had sent after them came back and reported what he had seen.

It was extraordinary, he said. He had hardly knocked on the door when out he came breathless with agitation, and he related what had been said. Hardly had he done so when Abu Jahl himself came up. They said: Whatever has happened, man? We've never seen anything like what you've done.

Confound you, he said. By God as soon as he knocked on my door and I heard his voice I was filled with terror. And when I went out to him there was a camel stallion towering above his head. I've never seen such a head and shoulders and such teeth on a stallion before. By God, if I 'd refused to pay up he would have eaten me.[27]

QURANIC CHAPTER 12: JOSEPH (YUSUF)

SIGNS 12:1-12:6

Most of this Chapter is devoted to the story of Prophet Joseph and we have already reviewed it.

> **Makkah:** *We relate to you the fairer of narratives through what We revealed to you of this, the Quran, although you had been before this among the ones who are heedless.* (12:3)

COMMENTARY°

The chapter is a single, complete unit with a clear Makkan character reflected in its subject matter, message and ambience. It reflects the nature of the critical period in which it was revealed. The Prophet was enduring a time when he felt lonely and alienated from his social surroundings, and his followers felt the strains of isolation. With the

revelation of this chapter, God tells His noble Messenger, Muhammad, the story of a noble brother, one Joseph ibn Jacob ibn Isaac ibn Abraham. Joseph too had to endure a series of tests and trials: First, his brothers schemed to get rid of him, then he was thrown into the well where he found himself in fear of his life. This was followed by his becoming a slave sold like an inanimate object, having no say in the matter and losing all the care and love of his parents.

QURANIC CHAPTER 12: JOSEPH (YUSUF)
SIGNS 12:7-12:20

Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:7)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:8)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:9)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:10)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:11)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:12)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:13)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:14)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:15)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:16)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:17)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:18)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:19)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:20)

QURANIC CHAPTER 12: JOSEPH (YUSUF)
SIGNS 12:21-12:29

Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:21)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:22)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:23)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:24)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:25)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:26)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:27)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:28)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:29)

QURANIC CHAPTER 12: JOSEPH (YUSUF)
SIGNS 12:30-12:35

Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:30)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:31)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:32)

Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:33)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:34)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:35)

Quranic Chapter 12: Joseph (Yusuf)
Signs 12:36-12:42

Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:36)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:37)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:38)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:39)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:40)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:41)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:42)

Quranic Chapter 12: Joseph (Yusuf)
Signs 12:43-12:49

Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:43)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:44)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:45)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:46)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:47)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:48)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:49)

Quranic Chapter 12: Joseph (Yusuf)
Signs 12:50-12:57

Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:50)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:51)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:52)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:53)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:54)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:55)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:56)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:57)

Quranic Chapter 12: Joseph (Yusuf)
Signs 12:58-12:68

Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:58)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:59)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:60)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:61)

Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:62)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:63)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:64)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:65)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:66)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:67)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:68)

QURANIC CHAPTER 12: JOSEPH (YUSUF)
SIGNS 12:69-12:79

Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:69)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:70)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:71)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:72)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:73)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:74)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:75)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:76)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:77)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:78)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:79)

QURANIC CHAPTER 12: JOSEPH (YUSUF)
SIGNS 12:80-12:93

Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:80)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:81)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:82)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:83)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:84)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:85)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:86)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:87)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:88)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:89)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:90)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:91)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:92)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:93)

QURANIC CHAPTER 12: JOSEPH (YUSUF)
SIGNS 12:94-12:104

Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:94)

Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:95)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:96)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:97)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:98)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:99)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:100)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:101)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:102)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:103)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:104)

Quranic Chapter 12: Joseph (Yusuf)
Signs 12:105-12:111

Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:105)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:106)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:107)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:108)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:109)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:110)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (12:111)

Student Assessment

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I tested myself before I went to class by trying to summarize, orally or in writing, the main points of the previous class meeting because I realize if I cannot summarize main points, I haven't learned them.

I learned to test my thinking using intellectual standards: Being clear, accurate, relevant, precise, reasonable.

LESSON 54(1). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL STANDARD EMBODYING A POINT OF VIEW, FRAME OF REFERENCE, PERSPECTIVE

Human thought is relational and selective. It is impossible to understand any person, event, or phenomenon from every vantage point simultaneously. Our purposes often control how we see things. Critical thinking requires that this fact be taken into account when analyzing and assessing thinking.

HOW IS POINT OF VIEW DEFINED?

The point of view for this course on Quranic Studies is that of the Quran. All the words in the Quran are the Words of God as revealed to Prophet Muhammad. The Prophet related whatever was revealed to him through the Angel Gabriel (*ruh al-qudus*) with God's permission.

The Quranic point of view gives guidance to humanity through the prophetic mission, to bring people from the darkness of ignorance into the light of knowledge and wisdom. As 14:1 says: *This is a Book We caused to descend to you so that you have brought humanity out from the darkness into the light with the permission of their Lord to the path of The Almighty, The Worthy of Praise.* (14:1)

In the Quranic revelation, darkness is not just an individual's state of ignorance, but includes his worship of material gain in place of worshipping God, egoism, being a slave to his desires and being greedy, among other things.

On the level of society, darkness refers to injustice, oppression and/or discrimination and persecution as the sign to Moses (14:5) says: *Certainly, We sent Moses with Our signs saying: Bring out your folk from the shadow into the light and remind them of the Days of God. Truly, in that are signs fc every enduring, grateful one.* (14:5)

The darkness here refers to the oppression and injustice of Pharaoh while the light is that of justice and freedom. The Quranic signs that refer to darkness or shadow and light always refer to darkness or shadow in the plural, while light is in the singular referring to the path of God-consciousness (*taqwa*).

QURANIC CHAPTER 15: THE ROCKY TRACT (AL-HIJR)

SIGNS 15:1-15:15

Makkah: *Alif Lam Ra. That are the signs of the Book and of a clear Recitation.* (15:1)

It may be those who were ungrateful would wish that they had been ones who submit to God. (15:2)

Forsake them to eat and let them take joy and be diverted with hopefulness. Then, they will know. (15:3)

And We caused not a town to perish but there was
for it a known prescription. (15:4)
No community precedes its term nor delays it. (15:5)
And they say: O you to whom was sent down
the Remembrance,
truly, you are one who is possessed. (15:6)
Why have you not brought angels to us if you had been
the ones who are sincere? (15:7)
We send angels down not but with The Truth.
If they come to the ungrateful,
they would not have been ones who are given respite. (15:8)
Truly, We, We sent down the Remembrance
and, truly, We are ones who guard it. (15:9)
And, certainly, We sent Messengers before you
to partisans of the ancient ones. (15:10)
And approach them not any Messenger
but they had been ridiculing him. (15:11)
Thus, We thrust it into the hearts of the ones who sin. (15:12)
They believe not in it. Surely, passed away before them
a custom of the ancient ones. (15:13)
And even if We opened for them a door from heaven
and they continued going up to it, (15:14)
they would say: Truly, our sight was dazzled.
Nay! We were a bewitched folk. (15:15)

COMMENTARY°

THE UNGRATEFUL INDULGE IN WISHFUL THINKING

This opening passage speaks about the nature of the book which the ungrateful reject as fabrication, adding a threat that they will soon witness a day when they wish they had submitted themselves to God and become Muslims. It tells them that that day has a fixed time, and that is the reason for its delay. It mentions the challenges they make and how they demand that angels be brought to them. It threatens them by stating that when God sends down angels to the ungrateful, He destroys them altogether. Finally the chapter speaks of the real reason for their unbelieving attitude. It is certainly not for lack of evidence, but rather due to their entrenched stubbornness.

Alif Lam Ra. That are the signs of the Book and of a clear Recitation. (15:1) The three separate letters with which these signs starts and similar ones that occur at the beginning of some Quranic signss make up the book, i.e. the Quran. They are available to all. They make the sublime signs, which are inimitable in composition and argument. These letters do not have an intrinsic meaning in them-

selves, but they make up the Quran, which is very clear in its meaning.

People who do not believe in the revelation of this inimitable book, and describe the Quran as fabricated when it is very clear in its import, will come to see a day when they will dearly wish that they had adopted a totally different attitude. They will wish that they had been believers and that their behavior was in line with the teachings of religion. *It may be those who were ungrateful would wish that they had been ones who submit to God.* (15:2)

They may wish so but that will be when no wish is of use. But in fact: *It may be those who were ungrateful would wish*. The way this is expressed implies a threat and a touch of derision. It also implies encouragement to make use of the available opportunity and submit to God before it is too late. For if the chance is lost and the day comes when they wish they had submitted themselves to God and accepted the Quranic message, their wishes will be of no avail.

This is followed by another implicit threat: *Forsake them to eat and let them take joy and be diverted with hopefulness. Then, they will know.* (15:3) Leave them to their carnal desires, eating and enjoying, without reflection, contemplation or thought to what is around them. Leave them with their deluding hopes and deceiving temptations, while life passes away and the opportunity is lost. Leave them so that you do not waste your own time with those who have condemned themselves when they lost their way in idle hopes and desires. The temptation shows them that they have a long life to come and that they will achieve what they covet.

This beguiling hope is a fatal one, and it is to this hope that the Prophet is commanded to leave the ungrateful. *Then, they will know* (15:3) but then it will be too late for such knowledge to be of any benefit to them. The command given to the Prophet implies a threat to them, as well as a strong call aiming to wake them up so that they could see their hope for what it is: a beguiling hope that causes them to overlook their inevitable fate.

But the laws God has set in operation for the world and for human life will continue along their respective courses. The end of each nation will come at the time appointed by God. Then it is the practices of each community that determine how these laws and how God's order will operate: *And We caused not a town to perish but there was for it a known prescription. No community precedes its term nor delays it.* (15: 4-15:5) Therefore, they must not be deluded by the fact that God's punishment has not taken them. God's law will take its well-marked course and operate as God wants it to operate. As for them, they will certainly come to know.

It may be said that there are communities which do not believe or do any good works or implement justice, but they continue to thrive and prosper. But this is nothing but delusion. Such communities must have a fair amount of goodness, even if it is limited to building a good life on earth, dealing justly among its own citizens and taking measures to ensure material prosperity within their own territories. They owe their continued existence to this goodness. When it is exhausted, they face their inevitable destiny. God's law will always operate, and every community has its time: *No community precedes its term nor delays it.* (15:5)

A PROMISE THAT WILL NEVER FAIL

The signs then describe their bad manners in the way they addressed the Prophet, when he had only presented to them the Quran which is a clear reminder of the truth. It helps to reawaken them to face the facts instead of running after beguiling hopes. He also reminded them of God's law and its operation. But they ridiculed him and spoke to him with extreme impudence. (15:6-15:7) Ridicule is apparent in their way of addressing the Prophet, *And they say: O you to whom was sent down the Remembrance.* (15:6) They actually deny the fact of revelation and the Prophet's message altogether, but they make this mocking address.

Their rudeness is carried still further as they insult the Prophet personally: *Truly, you are one who is possessed.* (15:6) This they do in response to his call on them to believe in God, using the Quran in all its clarity to address them. They go on to make unreasonable demands, asking for angels to come down to endorse his message: *Why have you not brought angels to us if you had been the ones who are sincere?* (15:7) The demand for angels is often repeated in this and other signs, and it is put to the Prophet Muhammad as it was put to prophets and messengers before him. This reflects the clear ignorance of those who are ungrateful, for it is he whom God has honored when He assigned prophethood to a few chosen people.

The reply to such ridicule, impudence and ignorance takes the form of re-stating the rule that is confirmed by the fates suffered by past communities. Angels are sent down to a messenger of God only to destroy the ungrateful of his community when their term is up. At this point there can be no more respite and no further delay: *We send angels down not but with The Truth. If they come to the ungrateful, they would not have been ones who are given respite.* (15:8) Is this what they want and demand?

PRESERVATION OF THE QURAN

The signs then call on them to look carefully on God's guidance and reflect on it. God only sends down the angels with the truth. He commands them to establish and implement it. In the case of persistent ungrateful, the truth is to destroy them. Not only do they deserve this, but it is also inevitable. Such destruction, then, is a truth in itself and the angels carry it out without delay. God chooses for them what is better than the choice they make for themselves. He gives them the Reminder so that they may reflect on it and follow its guidance. This is much better than sending down the angels with the final truth, if only they would reflect: *Truly, We, We sent down the Remembrance and, truly, We are ones who guard it.* (15:9)

A GUARANTEE FOR ALL TIME

At the time of the Prophet, this promise to preserve the Quran intact sounded a mere promise. Today, however, after all these great events and long centuries, it is indeed a great miracle confirming the indisputable fact that it is God's revealed book. *Truly, We, We sent down the Remembrance and, truly, We are ones who guard it* (15:9) God certainly tells the truth.

SAME OLD DENIALS

God consoles the Prophet and tells him that he is not unique ir his position among God's messengers who, like him, were the targe of much ridicule and rejection. The ungrateful always show their stubbornness in denying the true faith.

And, certainly, We sent Messengers before you to partisans of the ancient ones. And approach them not any Messenger but they had been ridiculing him. (15:10-15:11) It is the same story. Just like the ungrateful in the communities of old received what God's messengers told them, the same is the case with the ungrateful in your community. They all show the same attitude. Their hearts, having turned away from God's messages and been hostile to God's chosen messengers, are no longer able to reflect or receive a message as it should be received: *Thus, We thrust it into the hearts of the ones who sin. They believe not in it.* (15:12) We let it sink into their hearts as its truth is denied, subject to ridicule, because their hearts cannot receive it except in this way. This applies to all generations and communities, past, present and future. Those who deny the truth of God's message are of the same nature: *Surely, passed away before them a custom of the ancient ones.* (15:13)

It is not proper evidence of the truth of God's message that they lack. They are stubborn, unwilling to change, no matter what signs

and proofs are given to them. At this point, the signs give a particularly rich image of repugnant obstinacy and mean strong-headedness: "If We opened for the ungrateful a gateway to heaven and they had ascended higher and higher, still they would surely say: *And even if We opened for them a door from heaven and they continued going up to it, they would say: Truly, our sight was dazzled. Nay! We were a bewitched folk.* (15:14-15:15) We can imagine them ascending higher and higher into the sky, going through a special door that opens for them, and they climb physically and see with their eyes the open door. Yet their stubborn attitude remains, whereby they deny the truth of what they see and feel, claiming that someone must have cast a spell over them so that they cannot see clearly. They claim that what they see is mere fantasy: *Truly, our sight was dazzled. Nay! We were a bewitched folk.* (15:15) All we see and feel is mere illusion.

This lack of feeling of God's existence despite all the evidence that testifies to His control of the universe clearly indicates that the receptive faculties are impaired. Their persistence in denying God is no less rude and impudent than that painted in the Quranic text: *And even if We opened for them a door from heaven and they continued going up to it, they would say: Truly, our sight was dazzled. Nay! We*

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 15:1-15:15

WHO IS GOD?

We send angels not but with The Truth. If they had been sent to the ungrateful, the ungrateful would not have been given respite. We sent down the Remembrance and We are ones who guard it. We thrust into the hearts of those who sin the desire to ridicule the Messengers. Even if We opened a door for them, at the end they would admit that they were unseeing and a bewitched folk.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

Forsake the ones who are ungrateful to eat and take joy and be diverted with hopefulness. They will know. The ungrateful say to you, Muhammad: O you to whom the Remembrance was revealed, you are one who is possessed. Why have you, Muhammad, not brought us angels if you had been sincere? We sent Messengers before you. Every Messenger we sent was ridiculed.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

It may be that those who were ungrateful wish that they had been ones who submit to God (*muslim*). No community precedes its term nor delays it.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quran says that God sends down the Remembrance and guards it. What is the Remembrance? God has sent down the signs of the Book and of a clear Recitation (Quran). The Remembrance is the Quranic message. God sent Remembrances before with various Messengers who were also ridiculed. Do not be disheartened, Muhammad. Know that God guards the Remembrance. The Remembrance is guarded by God. The ungrateful will be punished because of their denial of the Remembrance and their claim that the Prophet is possessed. That on that Day the ungrateful will wish that they had been among the ones who submit (*muslim*).

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

Remember what you said about these people before we studied them?
Which of our original beliefs were false or misleading?
Why did we think that way? Where did we get these ideas?
How do people come to think they know what other people are like before they know anything about them?
What false beliefs might other people have about us? Why?

LESSON 54(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY

THINKING INDEPENDENTLY

The Quran teaches us to think for ourselves when we read sign 2:256 that says that there is no compulsion in religion (*din*).

With this sign from God's point of view, we learn that it is up to each of us to have a close read of the Quran and decide whether or not to follow it. From reading the Quran with a critical mind, we learn how right judgment is clear from error. If we develop the following Quranic strategies or principles, and then practice the application of the principles, we will enhance our sense of intuition and insight. We will enhance our ability to reflect on our beliefs and actions. Quranic thinking encourages autonomous thinking, thinking for ourselves. We acquire many of our beliefs at an early age when we have a strong tendency to form beliefs for irrational reasons (because we want to believe, because we are rewarded for believing or punished for not doing so).

Quranic thinkers use critical skills and insights to reveal and eradicate beliefs to which they cannot rationally assent such as the beliefs of extremists. Quranic thinkers learn not to passively accept the beliefs of others; rather, they analyze issues themselves, reject unjustified authorities, and recognize the contributions of justified authorities. They thoughtfully form principles of thought and action; they do not mindlessly accept those presented to them. Nor are they unduly influenced by the language of another. If they find that a set of categories or distinctions is more appropriate than that suggested by another, they will use it. Recognizing that categories serve human purposes, they use those categories which best serve their purpose at the time. They are not limited by accepted ways of doing things. They evaluate both goals and how to achieve them. They do not accept as true, or reject as false, beliefs they do not understand. They are not easily manipulated.

Independent thinkers strive to incorporate all known relevant knowledge and insight into their thought and behavior. They strive to determine for themselves when information is relevant, when to apply a concept, or when to make use of a skill. They are self-monitoring: they catch their own mistakes; they don't need to be told what to do every step of the way.

The purpose or goal needs to be understood when you concern yourselves with accuracy and truth. You should ask yourself:

What evidence do I have to support this purpose?
How it can be explained to help others understand?
Can objections be raised from other points of view?
Are there any limitations to our point if view?

In the Quranic view, there is no compelling of ourselves or others to whatever it is that a person believes. This is what the Quran calls: "right judgment

that is clear from error". It is free of being compelled to believe something.

It is possible to believe something because those around us believe in it or because someone has rewarded us for believing such-and-such. Or, it may be that our interests are best served by believing something or because someone is more comfortable believing this. It could also be that we believe in something because our ego and image of ourselves is defined by believing this-or-that. None of these reasons are that of a Quranic critical thinker because these reasons lack the evidence which the Quranic message provides. Each of us has to make up his or her own mind using 'right judgment' about what it is that we believe.

In order for students to be sure that their beliefs and actions are based on good reasons and evidence provided by the Quranic message, they need to be rational. They do this by critiquing their own irrationality which includes their own fears and desires. They are rational when they cultivate their desire for clarity, accuracy and fair-mindedness and, then, integrate them into their behavior and thoughts.

QURANIC CHAPTER 15: THE ROCKY TRACT (AL-HIJR)
SIGNS 15:16-15:25

Makkah: *And, certainly,*
We made constellations in the heavens
and We made them appear pleasing to the ones who look. (15:16)
And We kept them safe from every accursed satan, (15:17)
but he who had the ability to hear by eavesdropping.
Then, a clear flame pursued him. (15:18)
And We stretched out the earth
and We cast on it firm mountains
and We caused to develop on it
that which was well-balanced of everything. (15:19)
And We made on it for you a livelihood
and for whomever you are not ones who provide. (15:20)
And there is not a thing, but its treasures are with Us
and We send it down not but in a known measure. (15:21)
And We sent fertilizing winds.
Then, We caused water to descend from heaven,
then, We satiated you,
and you are not ones who are its keepers. (15:22)
And, truly, it is We Who give life
and cause to die and We are the ones who inherit. (15:23)
And, certainly, We knew the ones who precede among you
and, certainly, We knew the ones who come later. (15:24)
*And, truly, **your** Lord is He Who assembles.*

Truly, He is Wise, Knowing. (15:25)

COMMENTARY°

This is the first line (15:16) in the great universal scene which tells of God's creative power. The 'constellations' may refer to the stars and planets themselves with their huge entities, or it may refer to their positions which define their orbits. In both cases, they testify to the great power behind their creation and to the accuracy and beauty that they reflect. (15:16)

With the beauty comes preservation, pure and intact: *And We kept them safe from every accursed satan.* (15:17) None, then, can spoil this purity by trying to spread evil in it. Satan is allowed to do his evil work only on earth, to tempt human beings to follow his wicked designs. The sky, which is a symbol for what is exalted and sublime, is beyond his reach. He may attempt to do so, but every attempt he makes is foiled: *but he who had the ability to hear by eavesdropping. Then, a clear flame pursued him.* (15:18)

The second line in this great and awesome scene draws the earth stretched as far as our sight can reach, and made easy to traverse. It shows the mountains giving it firmness and stability, and its plants and vegetation that are necessary sustenance for us and animal: *And We stretched out the earth and We cast on it firm mountains and We caused to develop on it that which was well-balanced of everything. And We made on it for you a livelihood and for whomever you are not ones who provide.* (15:19-15:20)

A CLEAR PLAN FOR ALL CREATION

In fact, the provisions given to every community are determined by God, according to His will. He grants them as He pleases, at the time He chooses, and in accordance with the laws He has set in operation: *And there is not a thing, but its treasures are with Us and We send it down not but in a known measure.* (15:21) No creature owns, or has power over, anything. The resources of everything are with God in His supreme realm. He grants it to His creation, in their respective worlds, according to a defined measure. Nothing is given or provided arbitrarily.

We have here a precise statement: *And there is not a thing, but its treasures are with Us and We send it down not but in a known measure.* (15:21)

Of the things that God sends in accordance with defined measure are winds and water: *And We sent fertilizing winds. Then, We caused water to descend from heaven, then, We satiated you, and you are not ones who are its keepers.* (15:22) The Arabic term, *lawaqih*,

which means heavily loaded has been interpreted by some according to the scientific meaning of 'fertilizing', referring to the fact that the winds carry the pollen from some plants or trees to fertilize the female ones.

What is referred to here is rather the fact that winds carry moisture, just like a she-camel becomes heavy with milk. God then sends down water from that moisture carried by the winds, and He allows us to drink it for our own survival. Yet we cannot retain it all: *You are not ones who are its keepers.* (15:22) It has not come from the storehouses of human beings, but from God's treasures. It has been poured according to a well-defined measure.

The winds move, carry the moisture and pour the water in accordance with the laws of nature. But who has determined all this in the first place? It is all determined by the Creator who has set the original law of the universe which gives rise to all aspects and operates all phenomena: *And there is not a thing, but its treasures are with Us and We send it down not but in a known measure.* (15: 21)

We note here how every move is referred to God, even the drinking of water: *Then, We caused water to descend from heaven then, We satiated you.* (15:22) What is meant here is that we have fashioned you in a way which makes you in need of water, and we made the water suitable for your needs. All this is made according to a measure. It is all set in operation by God's will.

The signs then perfects the attribution of all matters to God alone, stating that life and death, the living and the dead, the resurrection and judgement belong to Him: *And, truly, it is We Who give life and cause to die and We are the ones who inherit. And, certainly, We knew the ones who precede among you and, certainly, We knew the ones who come later. And, truly, your Lord is He Who assembles. Truly, He is Wise, Knowing.* (15:23-15:25)

Thus the second passage complements the first. In the first passage we have the statement: *And We caused not a town to perish but there was for it a known prescription. No community precedes its term nor delays it.* (15:4-15:5) Here, in this passage, it is emphasized that life and death are determined by God, the heir to all life, and He knows whom He has determined to die early and who will have their death delayed. It is He who gathers them all together at the end, for: *Truly, He is Wise, Knowing.* (15:25) He determines the term of every community according to His wisdom. He knows when it dies, and when it is resurrected and all that happens in between.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 15:16-15:25

WHO IS GOD?

God is the Creator of the heavens and the earth. There is not a thing, but its treasures are with Us and We send it down not but in a known measure.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

Your Lord, Muhammad, is He who assembles. He is Wise, Knowing.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

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5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quran tells us that the treasures that God sends down are in a known measure. What are some of the treasures that God sends down? The fertilizing winds and rain water. There are underlying important numbers to be studied in understanding how the universe and the earth work. Everything has a known number. God is the Creator and Originator of the universe.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to think Quranically in regard to there being no compulsion in the way of life (*din*).

I studied the signs as a way to begin to think Quranically. (Since you are in a Quranic Studies class, your goal should be to think Quranically.)

I was able to ask questions.

I engaged myself in lectures and discussions by asking questions.

By asking questions, I realized that I discovered what I did and did not know.

LESSON 54(3). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
DEVELOPING INSIGHT INTO EGO AND SOCIO-CENTRICITY

In the Quranic perspective, ego-centricity as exemplified by the extremists (Salafists) as being selfish, self-centered, egocentric, thinking only of himself or herself without regard for the feelings or desires of others; having or regarding himself or herself as the center of all things. These are signs of ingratitude. It is to be irrational and unjust, having little or no regard for interests, beliefs, or attitudes other than one's own.

The ungrateful in Makkah at the time of the revelation, similar to the extremists (Salafists) today, cannot readily believe that they are acting out of self-interest. They continue to be unwilling to consider the point of view of others, believing that their view is 'the truth'. They refuse to accept the points of view of others when that would prevent them from getting what they thought that they want. They have to be right about everything. Being self-centered is the opposite of thinking critically.

Ego-centricity in terms of critical thinking is to confuse the immediate perception with reality. It manifests itself as an inability or unwillingness to consider others' points of view, to accept ideas or facts which would conflict with gratification of desire. In the extreme, it is characterized by a need to be right about everything, a lack of interest in consistency and clarity, an all or nothing attitude: I am 100% right; you are 100% wrong, and a lack of self-consciousness of one's own thought processes. The ego-centric individual is more concerned with the appearance of truth, fairness, and fair-mindedness, than with actually being correct, fair, or fair-minded. Egocentricity is the opposite of critical thought.

As people are socialized, ego-centricity partly evolves into socio-ce tricity. What is socio-centricity? It is the assumption by Salafi students th their own social group is inherently and self-evidently superior to all others. When a group or society sees itself as superior and so considers its views about the world as correct or as the only reasonable or justifiable views, and all its actions justified, there is a tendency to presuppose this superiority in all of its thinking and thus to think closed-mindedly. All dissent and doubt are considered disloyal, and rejected without consideration. Few people recognize the socio-centric nature of much of their thought. They develop a prejudice.

What is prejudice? A judgment, belief, opinion, point of view—favorable or unfavorable—formed before the facts are known, resistant to evidence and reason, or in disregard of facts which contradict it. Self-announced prejudice is rare. Prejudice almost always exists in obscured, rationalized, socially validated, functional forms. It enables people to sleep peacefully at night even while flagrantly abusing the rights of others. It enables people to get more of what they want, or to get it more easily. It is often sanctioned with a superabundance of pomp and self-righteousness. Unless students who are prone to radicalization recognize these powerful tendencies toward selfish thought in

the Salafi ideology, even in what appear to be lofty actions and moralistic rhetoric, they will not face squarely the problem of prejudice in human thought and action.

Uncritical and selfishly critical thought are often prejudiced. Most instruction in schools today, because students do not think their way to what they accept as true, tends to give students prejudices rather than knowledge. For example, partly as a result of schooling, people often accept as authorities those who incite irrational fear in them and unjust opinions. This prejudice toward pseudo-authority impedes rational assessment. Ego-centric identification extends to groups. The individual goes from: I am right! to: We are right! To put this another way, people find that they can often best satisfy their egocentric desires through a group.

Their belief in their own rightness is easier to maintain because they suppress the faults in their thinking. They automatically hide their ego-centricity from themselves. They fail to notice when their behavior contradicts their self-image. They base their reasoning on false assumptions they are unaware of making. They fail to make relevant distinctions of which they are otherwise aware, and able to make (when making such distinctions does not prevent them from getting what they want). They deny or conveniently 'forget' facts inconsistent with their conclusions. They often misunderstand or distort what others say.

The solution, then, is to learn how the Quran, their sacred text, teaches how to reflect on their reasoning and behavior; to make their assumptions explicit, to critique them, and, when they are false, stop making them; to apply the same concepts in the same ways to themselves and others; to consider every relevant fact, and to make their conclusions consistent with the evidence; and to listen carefully and openmindedly to those with whom they disagree. They can change egocentric tendencies when they see them for what they are: irrational and unjust. Therefore, the development of the awareness of students of their egocentric and sociocentric patterns of thought is a crucial part of education in Quranic critical thinking.

Students, and American Muslim students, in particular, should learn from the Quran how to reflect in order to solve any problem of self-centeredness or egocentricity that they may have. They should learn to reflect on their reasoning ability as well as on their behavior. This they do by clarifying their beliefs, critiquing them and when they realize that they may be false, they stop believing or behaving as they had been doing. They should reflect on all the relevant facts and make sure that their conclusions are consistent with the evidence they have before them. They need to listen carefully to others and be open-minded to other points of view.

Being self-centered carries over from an individual to one's society. Being sociocentric is to tend to regard one's own social group or family as superior to others. When students study the early pre-Islamic community, they find

that the Arabs in pre-Islamic times followed tribal law. Their slogan was: My tribe, right or wrong; my tribe is better than your tribe; my family is better than your family. This was how their individual self-centeredness transformed into socio-centricity. Thinkers, such as the pre-Quranic Arab, who were not critical thinkers, often confused their loyalty to their group by constant support even if their group was wrong. 'Group think' results when people egocentrically attach themselves to a group. One can see this in both children and adults: My daddy is better than your daddy! My school (religion, country, race, etc.) is better than yours.

If ego-centricity and socio-centricity are the disease, critical thinking that brings self-awareness is the cure. In cases in which their own egocentric commitments are not supported, few people accept another's egocentric reasoning. Most can identify the socio-centricity of members of opposing groups. Yet when we are thinking egocentrically or socio-centrically, it seems right to students (at least at the time).

Although everyone has egocentric, sociocentric, and critical (or fairminded) tendencies to some extent, the purpose of education in critical thinking is to help students move away from ego-centricity and socio-centricity toward increasingly critical thought. The sacred text helps students learn about their own sense of irrationality and injustice to the extent that it is present. Students should repeatedly discuss why people think irrationally and act unfairly.

The teacher can facilitate discussions of ego-centric or socio-centric thought and behavior whenever such discussions seem relevant. Such discussions can be used as a basis for having students think about their own egc centric or sociocentric tendencies. The class can discuss conditions und which people are most likely to be egocentric and how ego-centricity interfere with their ability to think and listen. By discussing what people think (and how they think) when they are being egocentric and sociocentric, students can begin to recognize common patterns of ego-centric thought. The class can discuss some of the common false assumptions they make at times. For example:

> Anyone who disapproves of anything I do is wrong or unfair.
> I have a right to have everything I want.
> Truth is what I want it to be. Different is bad.
> Our group (country, school, language, etc.) is better than any other.

QURANIC CHAPTER 15: THE ROCKY TRACT (AL-HIJR)

SIGNS 15:26-15:44

Makkah: *And, certainly, We created the human being out of earth-mud of soft wet earth.* (15:26)

And We created the ones who are spirits before

from the fire of a burning wind. (15:27)
*And mention when **your** Lord said to the angels:*
Truly, I am One Who is Creator
of mortals out of earth-mud of soft wet earth. (15:28)
That is when I shaped him
and breathed into him of My Spirit.
So fall down before him as ones who prostrate themselves. (15:29)
The angels prostrated themselves, one and all, (15:30)
but Iblis.
He refused to be with the ones who prostrate themselves. (15:31)
*He said: O Iblis! What is with **you** that **you** be not with*
the ones who prostrate themselves? (15:32)
Iblis said: I will not be prostrating myself
*before a mortal whom **You** created*
out of earth-mud of soft wet earth. (15:33)
*It was said: Go **you** forth from here,*
*for, truly, **you** are accursed!* (15:34)
*And, truly, a curse will be upon **you***
until the Day of Judgment. (15:35)
Iblis said: O my Lord! Give me respite until the Day
they are raised up. (15:36)
*He said: Then, truly, **you** are*
among the ones who are given respite (15:37)
until the Day of the known time. (15:38)
Iblis said: My Lord!
*Because **You** led me into error I will,*
certainly, make the earth appear pleasing to them
and I will lead them one and all into error, (15:39)
*but **Your** servants among them,*
the ones who are devoted. (15:40)
He said: This is the straight path to Me. (15:41)
Truly, as for My servants there is no authority
*for **you** over them,*
*but ones who are in error followed **you**.* (15:42)
And, truly, hell is promised to them one and all. (15:43)
It has seven doors. Then, for everyone,
a door set apart, is for them. (15:44)

COMMENTARY°

THE ORIGINS OF CREATION OF THE HUMAN BEING

At the outset difference in the two natures is clearly stated. (15:26-15:27) The dry clay which gives off a sound when knocked and which is originally black mud given a specific shape is totally

different from the fire described here as scorching, blowing fiercely. We learn later that another element is added to our nature, namely, the breathing of God's spirit into it. Satan's nature, however, remained that of the fire of scorching winds. (15:28-15:35)

THE ENCOUNTER AND THE FALL

God said to the angels: (15:28-15:29) And what God said immediately took effect, for His word expresses His will, and His will is always done. We cannot question how the breath of God's eternal spirit mixed with the clay that has limited life. Such arguments are no more than idle play. It is indeed a child's play with our intellect itself. It forces the human mind out of its own realm in which it may exercise its powers of perception, reflection and comprehension. All the controversy that has been raised over this issue, past and present, betrays ignorance of the nature of the human mind, its characteristics and limitations. It simply forces the human mind to try to measure God's work by human standards. It is an altogether wrong premise.

What happened after God issued His order to the angels to prostrate themselves before Adam? *The angels prostrated themselves, one and all.* (15:30) That is in the nature of this aspect of God's creation, the angels. They obey God's orders whatever they are, without argument or delay. However, something else also took place at the same time: *But Iblis. He refused to be with the ones who prostrate themselves.* (15:31)

Iblis belongs to a different type of creation, separate from the angels. He is created out of fire while they are created out of light. They do not disobey God, whatever His command may be. He, on the other hand, disobeyed God, rejecting His command. For certain, then, he is not, and never was, one of the angels. That we have here a form of exception, more strongly pronounced in the Arabic text, refers to what is called in Arabic linguistics 'inconsequential exception'. It is acceptable to say in Arabic: "The Joneses have come except for Ahmad", when you know that Ahmad does not belong to the Jones family, but is always with them. Now since the order stated here has been issued to the angels, how could it apply to Iblis? That the same order was issued to Iblis is clearly stated in Chapter 7. There the order to Iblis is mentioned in a later sign, when God questions him: *He said: What prevented you from prostrating yourself when I commanded you?* (7:12) This is clear proof that Iblis was given the same order. He might have been included in the order given to the angels, if he was with them at the time, or perhaps a separate order was issued to him. However, this is not mentioned here and this shows that he is of a far lesser position than the angels. Furthermore,

the texts we have, and Satan's own behavior, all demonstrate that he was not one of the angels.

*[God] said: What prevented **you** from prostrating **yourself** when I commanded **you**? Satan said: I am better than he. **You** had created me of fire and **You** had created him of clay.* (15:32-15:33) Thus the nature of this creature, who was created out of the fire of scorching winds, has surfaced. We see that arrogance, conceit and disobedience are part of his nature. Iblis mentions the clay and mud, but does not mention the sublime spirit that mixes irrevocably with that mud. In his insolence he declares that a great creature like him could not prostrate himself to a human being whom God has created out of mud molded into shape.

Such an attitude leads to its natural consequence: *It was said: Go **you** forth from here, for, truly, **you** are accursed! And, truly, a curse will be upon **you** until the Day of Judgment.* (15:34-15:35) This is a just reward for disobedience and rebellion.

At this point, his evil characteristics come out in full force. We see how he nurses his grudges and how he plans to spread evil: *Iblis said: O my Lord! Give me respite until the Day they are raised up. He said: Then, truly, **you** are among the ones who are given respite until the Day of the known time.* (15:36-15:38) He requests respite to the Day of Judgment, but not to have the opportunity to repent of his sin which he has committed in the presence of God Almighty. It is not to atone for his sin that he wants to be spared death until the Day of Judgment, but rather to exact revenge on Adam and his offspring. He is avenging himself against humanity for his expulsion and the curse that he has incurred. He thus blames Adam for his expulsion, instead of acknowledging that it was the result of his own sinful insolence.

*Iblis said: My Lord! Because **You** had led me into error I will, certainly, make the earth appear pleasing to them and I will lead them one and all into error, but **Your** servants among them, the ones who are devoted.* (15:39-15:40) It is Iblis himself who has chosen the battleground, which is the earth. *I will, certainly, make the earth appear pleasing to them.* (15:39) He also states what he will use for a weapon. He will simply tempt humanity by making what is foul appear to be fair, so that they are tempted to do it. In fact, no human being resorts to foul things unless these seem fair to him by some trick perpetrated by Satan. Thus he sees such foul things in a guise which is different from what they truly are. Therefore, people should always remember the weapon which Satan uses. If they find something attractive and are tempted, they should make sure lest it has been made to appear so by Satan. Proper refuge is to ensure that their

link with their Lord is kept in fine tuning by worshipping Him as He should be worshipped. Even according to his own statement, Satan has no power over God's faithful servants: "I shall most certainly beguile them all into grievous error, except for those of them who are truly Your faithful servants." (Signs 39-40) God chooses from among His servants those who purge themselves of all evil and worship Him alone, as though they see Him. It is over such people that Satan holds no sway.

Satan knows that this condition which he himself has stated is one which he cannot change because it is part of the laws governing human nature. Therefore, the reply to Satan's words: (15:41-14:42) This is the way established by the will of God as a final arbiter with regard to guidance and going astray. *Truly, as for My servants there is no authority for you over them, but ones who are in error followed you.* (15:42) They are immune to your devices and schemes, as they close all entry points to their minds and hearts. They always look to God for guidance, and they know what pleases Him by their nature which they purge of all sin. Satan has power only over 'those who choose to follow' him, as they have been in error, going far astray. Those who dedicate themselves to God will not be left without guidance.

The outcome is also clear. It is stated right at the beginning: *And, truly, hell is promised to them one and all. It has seven doors. Then, for everyone, a door set apart, is for them.* (15:43-15:44) For those who go astray are of different categories. Each gate to hell will have its portion from among them, according to the nature of their deeds.

This ends the scene of the beginning of human life, putting great emphasis on the lesson to be learnt. It tells how Satan finds his way into the human soul, trying to overpower the sublimity of the spirit breathed into us with the characteristics of our clay origin. Those who maintain their links with God, emphasizing their spirit characteristics will have nothing to fear from Satan.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 15:26-15:44

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The passage is about the creation of the human being and the role that Satan played in refusing to bow down.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary**

(concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions,** (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?s
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message here speaks of the creation of the human being and Satan's arrogance. How did Satan show his arrogance? He refused to bow down to the first human being when commanded to do so by God. Satan thought that he was better than the human being because he was made of fire and the human being was created of clay. Satanic forces may show forth through our ego when we think that we are better than something or someone else. God loves not the arrogant. Satanic forces exist and may influence our actions.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to evaluate my ideas based on what I had learned in this lesson.

I was able to then describe why I had these ideas.

After study, you should evaluate your ideas in light of what you have learned, and why you had these ideas.

> *Those who were ungrateful should not assume that the indulgence We grant to them is better for them. We only grant indulgence to them so that they add sin! For them is a despised punishment.* (3:178)

LESSON 54(4). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY EXPLORING THOUGHTS UNDERLYING FEELINGS AND FEELINGS UNDERLYING THOUGHTS

In order to better analyze ourselves, we need to separate our sense of reason from their emotions, our *nafs al-natiqah* from our *nafs al-ammarah* as if we had two opposing parts in our mind. Yet, they are closely connected. Our reason is based on some level of our emotions and our emotions are based on some level of our reasoning. To develop self-understanding, to come to know who we are, we need to understand the connection between the two.

Those who develop Quranic critical thinking come to realize that they are responding to a situation with their feelings (emotions) rather than with their reason (thought).They realize that their feelings would change if they understood the situation in a different way.

The Quran cautions:

It has been found that uncritical thinkers are likely not to see any relationship between their feelings and their thoughts. This allows them to escape any responsibility for their feelings and thoughts and their resulting actions or behavior. The Quran says:

If we tend to base our decisions on our emotions, we need to understand them by asking ourselves the Quranic question: *Do they feel that they want other than the way of life of God* (din) *while to Him submitted whatever is in the heavens and the earth willingly or unwillingly and they are returned to Him?* (3:83)

> When Amr and Abd Allah went back to Makkah, not having been able to bring back the Messenger's Companions who had migrated to Abyssinia and having received a sharp rebuff from the Negus, Umar had become a Muslim in the month of Dhu al-Hijja, he being a strong, stubborn man whose proteges none dare attack. The Messenger's Companions were so fortified by him and Hamza that they got the upper hand of the Quraysh.
>
> Abd Allah ibn Masud used to say: We could not pray at the Kabah until Umar became a Muslim, and then he fought the Quraysh until he could pray there and we prayed with him. We were on the point of setting out for Abyssinia, and Amir had gone out for something we needed, when Umar came and stopped beside me, he being an idolater at the time, and we were receiving harsh treatment and affliction from him.
>
> He said: So you are off, O mother of Abd Allah. Yes, I said, we are going to God's country. You have violently ill-treated us until God has given us a way out.
>
> He said: God be with you, and I saw in him a compassion which

I had never seen before. Then he went away, and I could see plainly that our departure pained him; and when Amir came back with the thing he needed I said to him: O father of Abd Allah, I wish you had seen Umar just now and the compassion and sorrow he showed on our account.

When he asked me if I had hopes of his becoming a Muslim, I replied that I had, to which he answered: The man you saw will not become a Muslim until al-Khattab's donkey does. This he said in despair of him because of his harshness and severity against the Quranic message.

Umar's sister was Fatima bint al-Khattab. She was married to Said ibn Zayd ibn Amr ibn Nufayl, both of whom had early on become Muslims and concealed the fact from Umar.

Now Nuaym ibn Abd Allah al-Nahham, a man of his tribe from Adiyy ibn Kab clan, had become a Muslim and he also concealed the fact out of fear of his people. Khabbab ibn al-Aratt used often to come to Fatima to recite the Quran to her.

One day Umar came out, girt with his sword, making for the Messenger, and a number of his Companions, who he had been informed had gathered in a house at al-Safa, in all about forty, including women. With the Messenger was his uncle Hamza and Abu Bakr and Ali from among the Muslims who stayed with the Messenger and had not gone out with those who went to Abyssinia.

Nuaym met him and asked him where he was going. I am making for Muhammad, the apostate, who has split up the Quraysh, made mockery of their traditions, insulted their faith and their gods, to kill him.

You deceive yourself, Umar, he answered, do you suppose that the Abdu Manaf clan will allow you to continue walking upon the earth when you have killed Muhammad? Had not you better go back to your own family and set their affairs in order?

What is the matter with my family? he said.

Your brother-in-law, your nephew Saad, and your sister Fatima, have accepted the Quranic message and followed Muhammad in his religion, so you had better go and deal with them.

Thereupon, Umar returned to his sister and brother-in-law at the time when Khabbab was with them with the words from chapter 20: TaHa, which he was reciting to them. When they heard Umar's voice, Khabbab hid in a small room, or in a part of the house, and Fatima took the page and put it under her thigh.

Now Umar had heard the recitation of Khabbab as he came near the house, so when he came in he said: What is this balderdash I heard?

They answered: You have not heard anything.

He said: By God, I have, and I have been told that you have followed Muhammad in his religion. He seized his brother-in-law Said, and his sister Fatima rose in defense of her husband, and he hit her and wounded her.

When he did that they said to him: Yes, we are Muslims, and we believe in God and His Messenger and you can do what you like.

When Umar saw the blood on his sister he was sorry for what he had done and turned back and said to his sister: Give me this sheet which I heard you reading just now so that I may see just what it is which Muhammad has brought, for Umar could write.

When he said that, his sister replied that she was afraid to trust him with it.

Do not be afraid, he said, and he swore by his gods that he would return it when he had read it.

When he said that, she had hopes that he would become a Muslim, and said to him: My brother, you are unclean in your polytheism and only the clean may touch it.

So Umar rose and washed himself and she gave him the page in which was TaHa, and when he had read the beginning he said: How fine and noble is this speech.

When he heard that, Khabbab emerged and said: O Umar, by God, I hope that God has singled you out by His Messenger's call, for but last night I heard him saying: O God, strengthen faith by Abul Hakam ibn Hisham or by Umar ibn al-Khattab. Come to God, come to God, O Umar.

At that Umar said: Lead me to Muhammad so that I may bear witness. Khabbab replied that he was with a number of his Companions. So Umar took his sword and girt it on, and made for the Messenger and his Companions. He knocked on the door.

When they heard his voice, one of the Companions got up and looked through a chink in the door, and when he saw him girt with his sword, he went back to the Messenger in fear, and said: It is Umar with his sword on.

Hamza said: Let him in; if he has come with peaceful intent, we will treat him well; if he has come with ill intent, we will kill him with his own sword.

The Messenger gave the word and he was let in. The Messenger rose and met him in the room, seized him round the girdle or by the middle of his cloak, and dragged him along violently, saying: What has brought you, son of Khattab, for by God, I do not think you will cease (your persecution) until God brings calamity upon you.

Umar replied: O Messenger of God, I have come to you to be-

lieve in God and His Messenger and what he has brought from God.

The Messenger gave thanks to God so loudly that the whole household knew that Umar had become a Muslim.

The Companions dispersed, having become confident when both Hamza and Umar had accepted the Quranic message because they knew that they would protect the Messenger, and that they would get justice from their enemies through them.[28]

QURANIC CHAPTER 15: THE ROCKY TRACT (AL-HIJR)
SIGNS 15:45-15:60

Makkah: *Truly, the ones who are God-conscious*
will be amidst gardens and springs. (15:45)
Enter them in peace as ones who are safe! (15:46)
And We will tear out any grudges from their breasts.
They will be as brothers/sisters on couches, one facing the other.
(15:47)
In it neither fatigue will afflict them
nor will they be ones who are driven out. (15:48)
Tell My servants that I am The Forgiving, The Compassionate (15:49)
and that My punishment, it is a painful punishment. (15:50)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (15:51)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (15:52)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (15:53)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (15:54)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (15:55)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (15:56)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (15:57)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (15:58)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (15:59)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (15:60)

COMMENTARY°

Finally we come to what God touchingly says about the righteous: (15:45-15:48)

This Quranic message does not try to change human nature or to make humanity a different sort of creation. It acknowledges that in this life people experience malice and grudges. This is part of their human nature which faith does not totally eradicate. It simply works on it to reduce its intensity, and then elevates its domain so that believers love and hate for God's sake only. But in heaven, where their humanity attains its most sublime standard, the very sense of malice and grudge is removed. Here, people experience only pure love and brotherhood.

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 15:45-15:50

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

The God-conscious will be rewarded amidst gardens and springs.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

Here the Prophet is told to tell the servants of God that God is Forgiving, Compassionate. How will the servants of God be treated in the next life? They will be amidst gardens and springs. They will enter in peace as ones who ar safe. God will reward His servants. Those who are the servants of God wi receive a great compensation. The consequences for those who are servants of God will be eternal peace. The servants of God will be rewarded.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to do all of the following and, as a result, am beginning to understand my feelings about certain issues.
Raise basic issues to yourself.
Explore beneath the surface of things.
Follow-up problematic areas of feelings.
Discover the structure of their own thoughts and feelings.
Develop sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
Arrive at judgment through your own reasoning.

LESSON 54(5). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
DEVELOPING INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY

The development of an attitude of intellectual curiosity is of prime importance in learning how to become a Quranic critical thinker. Quranic thinkers need to be curious about their environment just as Umar al-Khattab had been regarding the conversion of the people around him. What were they listening to? What was Muhammad telling them: Why would my sister and her husband have converted? What is special about this message?.

Critical thinkers need to seek explanations of apparent discrepancies. They need to speculate as to possible causes of these discrepancies. In short, they need to be predisposed to wonder about the world around them. This sense of wonder, this intellectual curiosity that seeks explanations and proffers solutions, is something that can be and needs to be encouraged and developed.

TUFAYL AMR IBN AL-DAUS AND THE QURAYSH

In spite of his people's behavior the Messenger was continually giving them good counsel and preaching salvation from their evil state. When God protected him from them they began to warn all new-comers against him. Al-Tufayl Amr ibn al-Daus used to say that he came to Makkah when the Messenger was there and some of the Quraysh immediately came up to him. (Tufayl was a poet of standing and an intelligent man.) They told him that this fellow (Muhammad) had done them much harm; had divided their community and broken up its unity; in fact he talks like a sorcerer separating a man from his father, his brother, or his wife. We are afraid that he will have the same effect on you and your people, so don't speak to him or listen to a word from him.

They were so insistent that I decided not to listen to a word or to speak to him and I went so far as to stuff cotton in my ears when I went to the mosque fearing that I might overhear a word or two against my will. When I got to the mosque there was the Messenger of God standing at prayer by the Kabah, so I stood near him. God had decreed that I should hear something of his speech and I heard a beautiful saying. So I said to myself: God bless my soul! Here am I, an intelligent man, a poet, knowing perfectly well the difference between good and evil, so what is to prevent me from listening to what this man is saying? If it is good I shall accept it; if it is bad I shall reject it.

I stayed until the Messenger went to his house. I followed him and entered his house with him. I told him what his people had said and that they had so scared me that I had stuffed cotton in my ears lest I should hear what he was saying. But God had not allowed me

to remain deaf and I heard a beautiful saying. I said: So explain the matter to me. The Messenger explained the Quranic message to me and recited the Quran to me. By God I never heard anything finer nor anything more just. So I became a Muslim and bore true witness.

I said: O Prophet of God, I am a man of authority among my people and when I go back and call them to the Quranic message, pray to God to give me a sign which will help me when I preach to them. He said: O God give him a sign.

So I went back to my people and when I came to the pass which would bring me down to the settlement a light like a lamp played between my eyes and I said: O God, not in my face! for I fear that they will think that a dire punishment has befallen my face because I have left their religion. So the light moved and lighted on the top of my whip. The people began to look at that light attached to my whip like a candle while I was coming down from the pass to them.

When I got down my father came to me (he was a very old man) and I said: Be off with you, father, for I have nothing to do with you or you with me!

But why, my son? said he.

I said: I have become a Muslim and follow the religion of Muhammad.

He said: All right, my son, then my religion is your religion.

So I said: Then go and wash yourself and clean your clothes; then come and I will teach you what I have been taught.

He did so; I explained the Quranic message to him and he became a Muslim.

Then my wife came to me and I said: Be off with you, for I have nothing to do with you or you with me.

Why? she said: My father and mother be your ransom!

I said: The Quranic message has divided us and I follow the religion of Muhammad.

She said: Then my religion is your religion.

I said: Then go to Dhu al-Shara and cleanse yourself from it.

Now Dhu al-Shara was an image belonging to Daus and the *himd* was the temenos which they had made sacred to him; in it there was a trickle of water from a rivulet from the mountain.

She asked me urgently: Have you any fear from Dhu al-Shara on my account?

No, I said: I will go surety for that.

So she went and washed and when she returned I explained the Quranic message to her and she became a Muslim.

Then I preached the Quranic message to Daus, but they held back. I went to the Messenger in Makkah and said: O Prophet of

God, frivolous preoccupation has been too much for me with Daus, so invoke a curse on them. But he said: O God, guide Daus! Go back to your people and preach to them gently.[29]

LEAVING THE HOUSE OF ARQAM AND GOING PUBLIC

After Hamza and Umar bear witness, the Messenger leaves house of Arqam and practices openly in the Kabah. Of such great importance was the conversions of Hamza and Umar, that the Muslims were not able to practice openly and without fear in Makkah. The Messenger abandoned the house of Arqam and no longer concealed their formal prayers within their own homes. They would assemble together around the Kabah. This caused further dread among the Quraysh idolaters.[30]

QURANIC CHAPTER 15: THE ROCKY TRACT (AL-HIJR) SIGNS 15:61-15:79

Makkah: Book 26: Lot (15:61)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (15:62)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (15:63)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (15:64)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (15:65)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (15:66)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (15:67)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (15:68)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (15:69)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (15:70)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (15:71)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (15:72)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (15:73)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (15:74)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (15:75)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (15:76)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (15:77)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb) Companions of the Woods (15:78)
Makkah: Book 27: Jethro (Shuayb) Companions of the Woods ((15:79)

QURANIC CHAPTER 15: THE ROCKY TRACT (AL-HIJR) SIGNS 15:80-15:99

Makkah: Book 25: Companions of the Rocky Tract (15:80)
Makkah: Book 25: Companions of the Rocky Tract (15:81)

Makkah: Book 25: Companions of the Rocky Tract (15:82)
Makkah: Book 25: Companions of the Rocky Tract (15:83)
Makkah: *And availed them not what they had been earning.* (15:84)
And We created not the heavens and the earth and whatever is in between them but with The Truth. And, truly, the Hour is one that arrives.
So overlook with a graceful overlooking. (15:85)
*Truly, **your** Lord is The Knowing Creator.* (15:86)
Madinah: (15:87)
Makkah: *And stretch not out **your** eyes*
for what We gave of enjoyment in this life
to spouses among them, nor feel remorse for them,
*but make low **your** wing in kindness to the ones who believe.* (15:88)
And say: Truly, I am a clear warner, (15:89)
even as We caused to descend on
the ones who are partitioners, (15:90)
those who made the Quran into fragments. (15:91)
*So by **your** Lord, We will, certainly, ask them one and all* (15:92)
about what they had been doing. (15:93)
*So call aloud what **you** are commanded:*
Turn aside from the ones who are polytheists! (15:94)
*Truly, We sufficed **you** against the ones who ridicule,* (15:95)
those who make with God another god. But they will know. (15:96)
*And, certainly, We know that **your** breast became narrowed, injured in spirit, because of what they say.* (15:97)
*So glorify the praises of **your** Lor*
and be among the ones who prostrate themselves (15:98)
*and worship **your** Lord until the certainty approaches **you**.* (15:99)

COMMENTARY°

The comment stating the truth which sustains the heavens and the earth, and which was the basis of their creation has great significance. (15:85-15:86) It is given in a remarkable expression. Let us look at what this verse implies: *And We created not the heavens and the earth and whatever is in between them but with The Truth. And, truly, the Hour is one that arrives. So overlook with a graceful overlooking.* (15:85) It implies that the truth is central to the design, structure and management of the universe, central to its destiny and the destiny of all that it contains.

WHEN THE PROPHET IS IN DISTRESS

The Prophet is told to show kindness to the believers. The Quran expresses this sentence in a figurative way, telling the Prophet to "*but*

*make low **your** wing in kindness to the ones who believe.*" (15:88) This is an image denoting gentle treatment and good care of the believers. The Prophet is also instructed to say: "I am indeed the plain warner." This is the essential method of advocating the divine message. The warning is mentioned here on its own without adding the rejoinder of giving good and happy news. The warning is more suited here as the context mentions those who deride the truth, indulge in their worldly enjoyments and never contemplate the truth which is the basis of both the divine message and the existence of the universe.

"And say: *And say: Truly, I am a clear warner.* (15:89) This is the word every messenger has said to his people, including those who remain from old communities to whom messengers were sent with a reminder similar to the one Muhammad brought. Among such people in Arabia were some Christians and Jews who were not ready to accept the Quran with complete submission. They accepted parts of it and rejected others, as their prejudice dictated. These are the ones whom God describes here as the ones who break [God's revelation] into parts.

Just as We have bestowed from on high on those who later broke it into parts, and declare the Quran to be a confused medley. But, by your Lord, We will call them all to account for whatever they have done. (15:90-15:93) This chapter is a Makkan revelation, but the Quran addresses mankind generally. These were human beings who divided the Quran into parts, and they are responsible for their actions. The Quran has served a clear warning on them, as did their own scriptures. The Quran and the Prophet were not unfamiliar to them. God had formerly revealed scriptures to them. Therefore, they should have received the new revelations with acceptance and submission.

At this point the address turns directly to the Prophet, instructing him to continue along the way defined for him, proclaiming what God has commanded him to convey to people. Making the proclamation is described in Arabic as a term which also means 'break', to denote a strong and solid stand. He must not be deterred from making such a proclamation or be deflected from his way by the unbelief of an idolater or the ridicule of those who deride his message. God will protect him against these: *So call aloud what **you** are commanded: Turn aside from the ones who are polytheists! Truly, We sufficed **you** against the ones who ridicule, those who make with God another god. But they will know.* (15:94-15:96)

The Prophet is a human being who cannot help but be distressed when he hears people ascribing divinity to beings other than God, or deriding his message. He is eager to defend the truth and his message,

and is upset at all the falsehood and idolatry around him. He is, therefore, instructed to glorify his Lord and praise Him. Such glorification and worship will shield him against the evil he hears. Hence he should not stop praising his Lord and extolling His glory until that which is absolutely certain, i.e. death, arrives and he is gathered to His Lord: *And, certainly, We know that your breast became narrowed, injured in spirit, because of what they say. So glorify the praises of your Lord and be among the ones who prostrate themselves and worship your Lord until the certainty approaches you.* (15:97-15:99)

SUMMARY OF SIGNS 15:84-15:99

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD?

God gave you, Muhammad, seven often repeated parts of the sublime Quran. Be kind to ones who belive. Say: I am a clear warner. Turn aside from the idolaters. Call aloud, Muhammad, what you are commanded. We suffice you against the ones who ridicule. We know that your breast, Muhammad, became narrow, injured in spirit, because of what they say. Glorify the praises of your Lord. Be among the ones who prostrate themselves. Worship your Lord, Muhammad, until the certainty approaches you.

HOW ARE THE SIGNS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE COMMUNITY?

All will be asked about what they were doing.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quran reiterates that the Hour is that which will come. How does the Quranic message tell the Prophet to behave towards the ungrateful? Be graciously forgiving of them as their fate rests with God. The fate of everyone is in the hands of God. We are not responsible for the actions of others. We are each responsible for our own actions. The Hour will come.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I don't waste time. All humans waste some time; that is, fail to use all of their time productively or even pleasurably.
Sometimes I jump from one diversion to another, without enjoying any of them.
Sometimes I become irritated about matters beyond my control.
Sometimes I fail to plan well causing me negative consequences I could easily have avoided (for example, I spend time unnecessarily trapped in traffic—though I could have left a half hour earlier and avoided the rush).
Sometimes Ie worry unproductively.
Sometimes I spend time regretting what is past.
Sometimes I just stare off blankly into space.

APPENDIX 1: CORRELATION BETWEEN THE PRESENT ORDER OF CHAPTERS IN THE QURAN AND THEIR CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

1 = 96
2 = 68
3 = 73
4 = 74
5 = 1
6 = 111
7 = 81
8 = 87
9 = 92
10 = 89
11 = 93
12 = 94
13 = 103
14 = 100
15 = 108
16 = 102
17 = 107
18 = 109
19 = 105
20 = 113
21 = 114
22 = 112
23 = 53
24 = 80
25 = 97
26 = 91
27 = 85
28 =95
29 = 106
30 = 101
31 = 75
32 = 104
33 = 77
34 = 50
35 = 90
36 = 86
37 = 54
38 = 38
39 = 7
40 = 72
41 = 36
42 = 25
43 = 35
44 = 19
45 = 20
46 = 56
47 = 26
48 = 27
49 = 28
50 = 17
51 = 10
52 = 11
53 = 12
54 = 15
55 = 6
56 = 37
57 = 31
57 = 34
59 = 39
60 = 40
61 = 41
62 = 42
63 = 43
64 = 44
65 = 45
66 = 46
67 = 51
68 = 88
69 = 18
70 = 16
71 = 71
72 = 14
73 = 21
74 = 23
75 = 32
76 = 52
77 = 67
78 = 69
79 = 70
80 = 78
81 = 79
82 = 82
83 = 84
84 = 30
85 = 29
86 = 83
87 = 2
88 = 8
89 = 3
90 = 33
91 = 60
92 = 4
93 = 99
94 = 57
95 = 47
96 = 13
97 = 55
98 = 76
99 = 65
100 = 78
101 = 59
102 = 24
103 = 22
104 = 63
105 = 58
106 = 49
107 = 66
108 = 64
109 = 61
110 = 62
111 = 48
112 = 5
113 = 9
114 = 110

NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION TO QURANIC THINKING BY HASHIM KAMALI

1. The rough equation that earlier Muslim scholars drew between the Islamic and Western conceptions of reason tended to be oblivious of the categories of reason and the Western critique of reason that divided it into "instrumental reason, critical reason, functional reason, abstract reason, imperialist reason, decentering reason" and the like. For details see Abdelwahab M. Elmessiri, "Features of the New Islamic Discourse," a Cairo conference paper, 1997: http:// www.21stcenturytrust.org/messiri.doc.

2. Some commentators have distinguished a total of 30 expressions that revolve around thinking over the *ayat*. See Abu Bakr al-Razi, *Tafsir al-Kabir* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1985), II, 222f.

3. Cf Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-'Ilm fi'l-Quran al-Karim* (Cairo: Maktaba Wahba, 1416/1996), 36.

4. Al-Isfahani, *Mufradat Alfaz al-Qur'an*, under "*Fikr*".

5. Cf., Karim Douglas Crow, "Islam and Reason" in *Al-Shajarah*, vol. 8, (2003),120-1.

6. Abbas Mahmud, "al-Agqad, Al-Tafkir Faridah Islamiyyah" (Thinking is an Islamic Obligation) quoted in Jamal Badi and Mustapha Tajdin, *Creative Thinking: An Islamic Perspective*, 2nd edn. (Kuala Lumpur: International Islamic University Malaysia, 2005), 6.

7. Cf. al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-'Ilm*, 41-45 quoting ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's *Miftah Dar al-Sa'ada*, and 'Agqad's book entitled *al-Tafkir Faridah Islamiyya* (Beirut: al-Matba'a al-'Asriyya, 1992).

8. Cf. al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-Ilm*, 200.

9. Cf .Ibid., 202.

10. Al-Raghib al-Isfahani, *Mufradat Alfaz al-Quran* (Beirut: Dar al-Shamiyya, 1383/1964), 249.

11. Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i, *al-Mizan fi-Tafsir al-Quran* (Beirut: al-Mu'assasa al-'Alami, 1383/1964) II, 395.

12. Ala uddin al-Mattagi al-Hindi, *Kanz al-Ummah fi Sunan al-Aqwal wa'l-Af'al* (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risalah, 1383/1981), hadith no. 5873.

13. Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali, *Risalat al-Radd 'ala al-Laduniyya*, ed. 'Abd Allah Riyad Mustafa, (Damascus: Dar al-Hikma, 1986), 241.

14. CE Ahmad Fu'ad al-Ahwani, *al-Tarbiyah fi'l-Islam* (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif bi-Misr, 1968), 227-228.

15. Cf. Aziz al-Azmeh, *Arabic Thought and Islamic Societies* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 109.

16. Cf. Diane F. Halpern, *Thought and Knowledge: An Introduction to Critical Thinking* (Mahwah: New Jersey, Lawrence Erlbaum and Associates, 1996), 21.

17. Cf. Ibrahim B. Syed, "Critical Thinking" as online at http://www.lrfi. org/articles/articles_101_150/critical_thinking.htm.

(18. Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Lahore: Shah Muhammad Ashraf, reprint 1982), 127.

19. Malik Bin Nabi, *Intaj al-Mustashriqin* (Cairo: Maktabah 'Amir, 1990), 34.

20. Iqbal, op. cit., 139.

21. See for details Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, *What's Right with Islam is What's*

Right with America (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2004), 4-5.

22. Georg W. H. Hegel, *Philosophy of History* (New York: Dove Books, 1956), 109.

23. Louay Safi, "The Creative Mission of the Muslim Minorities in the West: Synthesizing the Ethos of Islam and modernity," a conference paper presented at Westminster University, London, England February 21, 2004: http://insight.org/articles/Current/MuslimMinorities.htm.

24. Cf., M.H. Kamali, "Islam, Rationality and Science," in Islam and Science, vol. 1, no. 2 (2003), 126f, see also Mehdi Golshani, "Philosophy of Science from the Qur'anic Perspective," in *Towards Islamisation of Disciplines* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1989), 73f.

25. Cf. Ishfaq Ahmad, "Research and Development Culture in the Islamic World: Past and Present Problems and Future Directions," in Abu Bakr Abdul Majeed et al. (eds.) *New Knowledge, Research and Development in the Muslim World* (Kuala Lumpur: Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia, 2004), 14-15.

26. See for a discussion Oliver Leaman, "Institutionalising Research and Development Culture in the Islamic and Non-Islamic World: A Comparative Perspective," in Abu Bakr Majeed, (ed.) *New Knowledge*, 50-51.

27. Malik bin Nabi, *Intaj al-Mustashriqin*, 26.

28. See for details Mohammad Hashim Kamali, "Issues in the Understanding of Jihad and Ijtihad" in *Islamic Studies* 41 (2002), 623 ff.

29. There is a chapter on *ijtihad* in M. H. Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1991, 3rd edn. 2003). See also my article "Issues in the Understanding of Jihad and Ijtihad" in *Islamic Studies*, 41 (2002), 617-635; and "Issues in the Legal Theory and Usul and Prospects for Reform" in *Islamic Studies*, 40 (2001), 1-21.

30. Sergio Moravia. *The Enigma of the Mind: The Mind-Body Problem in Contemporary Thought*, tr. S. Staton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. First published in Rome, 1986), 4-5.

31. See for example, Howard Gardner, *Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligence for the 21st Century* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

32. See for details Roger Garudy, "The Balance Sheet of Western Philosophy in this Century" in *Towards Islamisation of Disciplines* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1989), 399f.

33. Mehdi Golshani, "From Knowledge to Wisdom: A Qur'anic Perspective," in *Islamic Studies*, 44 (2005), 13.

34. Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Fiqh al-Awlawiyyat*, 68.

35. Cf., Al-Ahwani, *al-Tarbiyah fi'l-Islam*, 189.

36. Mohammad Hashim Kamali is Professor of Islamic Law and jurisprudence at the International Islamic University Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur. "Reading the Signs," Center for Islam and Science. Gale Group, 2006.

NOTES TO *BOOK YEAR 6*

1. Ibn Ishaq, *Life of Muhammad.*
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. Muhammad ibn Muslim al-Zuhri from Abu Bakr ibn Abdul-Rahman ibn al-Harith ibn Hisham al-Makhzumi from Umm Salama d. Abu Umayya ibn al-Mughayra wife of the Messenger said this.
18. Ibn Ishaq, *Life of Muhammad.*
19. See Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *The Middle Path of Moderation.*
20. Ibid.
21. See *Book Year 12* regarding the Journey by Night.
22. The Prophet says in regard to 17:34: Everything that belongs to a Muslim is forbidden to be taken away by another: His blood, honor and property.
23. The Prophet says in regard to 17:35: Anyone who is able to secure unlawful gain yet abandons this for no reason other than fearing God will certainly receive from God what is better than such gain here in this life, before they receive their reward in the life to come.
24. Refrain from assumption, for assumption is the basis of the worst lies. Another hadith related by Abu Dawud quotes the Prophet as saying: It is indeed a bad practice for a person to always begin his statements with, 'it is claimed." In another hadith the Prophet said: The worst falsehood is that a person makes his eyes see what they have not seen.
25. Abu Bakr al-Harithi informed us> Abul-Shaykh al-Hafiz> Muhammad ibn Sulayman> Abd Allah ibn Hazim al-Ayli> Badal ibn al- Muhabbar> Shubah> Aban> Mujahid who said this regarding this sign.
26. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Science and Civiliation in Islam.*
27. Ibn Ishaq, *Life of Muhammad.*
28. Al-Bakka said: Misar ibn Kidam from Sad ibn Ibrahim said that Abdullah ibn Masud said this; Abdul Rahman ibn al-Harith ibn Abdullah ibn Ayyash ibn Abu Rabia from Abdul Aziz ibn Abdullah ibn Amir ibn Rabia from his mother Umm Abdullah bint Abu Hathma said.
29. *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p 232.
30. Ibn Ishaq, *Life of Muhammad.*

Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Year 1

Laleh Bakhtiar

Critical Thinking and the Chronological Quran in the Life of Prophet Muhammad

The Year 7 of the Revelation (7 BH/615-616 CE)

Revised Edition

Introduction by
Mohammad Hashim Kamali

Library of Islam

Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series Year 7

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PREFACE

THE CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STUDIES TEXTBOOK SERIES

There are thirty books in this series. Books entitled *Book Year 1* to *Book Year 24* consist of one book for each year of the revelation. The chapters' or sections' signs (*ayat*) are presented according to the 558 *ruku* or sections of the 114 chapters of the Quran. They each include the relevant chapter (*surah*) or chapters (when they are short) or sections, *ruku* (when there are multiple sections in a particular chapter) in chronological order. The chapters are numbered according to the chronological order of the Quranic chapters provided by al-Azhar University as the officially accepted order of revelation. Each section (*ruku*) is followed by a commentary by one of the well-known commentators.

The Year 7, the present volume, covers events from Muharram 1-Dhu al-Hijja 30, 7 BH/September 30, 615 CE-September 18, 616 CE.

Books 25-28 are devoted to the Quranic stories of all other Prophets and Messengers in order of their dates. *Book 25: Adam, Cain and Abel, Enoch (Idris), Noah, Hud and the People of Aad; Saleh and the People of Thamud; Book 26: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Jacob (Israel), Joseph and Job; Book 27: Moses, Aaron, Children of Jacob (Israel), Jethro (Shuayb), Joshua, Khidr and Samuel; Book 28: David, Solomon, Elijah (Ilyas), Elisha (Alyasa), Jonah (Younis), Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl), Ezra (Uzayr), Dhul Qarnayn (Cyrus the Great or Alexander the Great), Luqman, Zechariah, John the Baptist (Yahya), Mary and Jesus.* The last two are: *Book 29: The Life of Prophet Muhammad from Birth to the Revelation* and *Book 30: Teacher's Manual.* The last, *Book 30,* has been prepared for the teacher's Lesson Plans.

At the beginning of each lesson, there is an exercise in critical thinking skills. These consist of one of the following: **The Nine Intellectual Standards, The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** and **The Seven Moral Traits.** The Eight Elements contain thirty-five strategies. However there is no specific order as to how they should be learned and incorporated into our thinking process.

Once we understand the critical thinking skills and then apply them to the signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. Once the skills as presented in the Quranic message are put into practice with the grace of God, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behavior.

Each lesson is followed by questions for classroom discussion or for dialogue. At the end of each lesson there is an assessment/assignment for students to use while they are developing critical thinking skills as they hopefully learn HOW the Quran teaches critical thinking.

SOURCES

The sources for the history include the works of Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hashim, Waqidi, Ibn Sad and commentaries by Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn, Tustari and Sayyid Qutb. The sources for the commentaries of Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn and Tustari have been used with the permission of the publisher, the Royal Institute of Ahl al-Bayt in Jordan. They are available on their website www.altafsir.com.

The inclusion of excerpted commentaries (tafsir) by Sayyid Qutb's In the Shade of the Quran (available online) in this Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series is because Sayyid Qutb is considered by some extremist groups as their intellectual source. By including excerpts from his eighteen volume Quranic commentary, extremists cannot disclaim the importance of learning critical thinking as this series is to help young adults learn HOW to think using self-realization (tahqiq) and critical thinking (furqan) skills taught by the Quran. This in order to arm young adults with the ability to choose reason over any irrational extremist ideology that is presented to them.

TERMINOLOGY

All Quranic signs are translations from The Sublime Quran. For the Muslim, the Quran is the Word (Logos) of God. It is this Word of God that has inspired artists, artisans, poets, philosophers and writers, those who had been the exponents of Islamic culture and civilization for almost 1500 years. Yesterday and today's Muslim wants to know more about each Word that God chose for His revelation through the Quran. This realization, in turn, prompted the translation of The Sublime Quran, an attempt to give the sense of unity within the revelation to a non-Arabic speaking reader.

There are several points to note about the terminology used in the translation of the Quranic text and the commentaries.

1. The blessed Prophet did not bring a new religion; he came to confirm what was right in the messages of the previous Prophets. Does this translation speak to the universality of the Quran? The Quran tells the Prophet, the mercy to all of humanity, to speak to people in their own language. Following his example, in addition to the translation being unbounded by time, in several sensitive cases, the word chosen to translate an Arabic word is also of a universal or inclusive rather than a particular or exclusive nature. This adds to the broadening of the perspective and scope of the Quran so that it becomes inclusive rather than exclusive to one particular group of people. In other words, in this way a larger audience can relate to its message.

2. The actual word "Islam" comes from the verb, "to submit" (*aslama*), submission (*sallama*), and ones who submit (*muslimun*). The Quran refers to itself (the Quran) from the very beginning of the revelation (68:35).

3. As previously indicated, the four books (Book 25, Book 26, Book 27 and Book 28) are the stories of the other Prophets and Messengers mentioned in the Quran. While these stories do have lessons to be learned by the Prophet

and those who heard the revelations as well as for us today, they do not refer directly to Prophet Muhammad and his prophethood following the beginning of the revelation. What remains in these books of the Quranic signs in the 24 years of the chronological Quran relate directly to him, what he did and what he was told to say. This allows us to understand his life directly from the Quranic message, the Quranic Sunnah, without any interruption of the stories about previous Prophets and Messengers.

4. Most English translations of the Quran refer to the "Children of Israel." The word "Israel" when used in the Quran refers to Jacob, the patriarch of the children who followed him such as Joseph. Therefore, it should be the "Children of Jacob" as it appears in these texts.

5. The words "*kufr*" and "*kafir*" have been translated here as "ingratitude" and "ungrateful" where the context allows. This is the first meaning of the word and many of us in our lifetime have met Muslims who are "ungrateful." It is the ungrateful Muslims who practice intolerance by declaring anyone who says: Peace be upon you (*as-salam alaykum*) as a non-believer (with what is called *takfir*). In those cases, it would not be suitable to call them "unbelievers" or "infidels," but it is clearly appropriate to refer to them as being "ungrateful" and this would include the early Quraysh, ungrateful for God's revelation and prophethood of Muhammad, who ridiculed the Prophet and fought against the Quranic message of love, forgiveness and peace.

6. Yet another example of the use of inclusive language in an attempt to speak to people in their own language, is the use of God instead of Allah. Many English speaking Muslims, as well as many of the English translations of the Quran to date, use Allah when speaking English instead of God. The intention on the part of the speaker is to maintain a sense of piety. They feel that using Allah in English moves them in that direction. Many even claim that the word Allah cannot be translated.

However well-intentioned a person may be, when speaking English, the use of the word Allah instead of God, first of all, does not follow the Quranic verse that tells the Prophet to speak to people in their own language. Subsequently, it does not follow the Sunnah of the Prophet who did speak to people in their own language.

In addition, it creates a divide between Muslims who use the word and the English speaking people of various faiths to whom they are speaking. In effect, it creates the illusion that there is more than One God—Allah and God. The response of the English speaking person of another faith is to say: I do not understand your religion; you have a different God than I do and you call Him Allah.

It needs to be clearly explained to English speaking Muslims that, unlike what they may feel, they do not have a monopoly on the word Allah. Arabic speaking Christians and Arabic speaking Jews also refer to God as Allah. The Old Testament and New Testament, when translated into Arabic, use Allah for God.

English speaking Muslims, therefore, need to recall the message of the Quran that God is One (tawhid). In addition, the Prophet did not bring a new religion but confirmed what was correct in the messages of previous Prophets, namely, that God is One. Finally, they need to follow the example of the Prophet, as the Quran says he is the model or example to be followed, by speaking to people in their own language.

7. The Arabic language, much like old English, has the second person singular (masculine: anta (where the verb ends in *ka*). The English equivalent is the subject: "thou" or the object: "thee" or the possessive: "thy." As these are no longer in common usage in English, wherever the original Arabic uses one of these terms, the word "**you**" or "**your**" appear in bold font so that the reader knows the original was the second person singular. When the Quran is speaking directly to the Prophet, it uses the pronoun "thee" or "thou" so it is an important distinction to make.

Using you (second person plural) is done to help English speaking readers, recognizing that using the second person plural pronoun you (masculine: *antum* where the verb ends in masculine: *kum*) for God is to intimate that God is plural, the only sin in the Quran that is unforgivable. By putting the pronoun **you** in bold font indicates the true intention.

8. For the Arabic word "ayah," the English word used in these texts is "sign" rather than the Biblical term, "verse."

9. Several of the signs were abrogated over time. However the indication of a sign being abrogated was done after the complete revelation of the Quran. Whether or not a sign was later abrogated does not change the fact that the first Muslims who listened to the Quran, heard the signs that may have later been said to have been abrogated and that a hafez of the Quran recites all the signs as they appear in the original Arabic revealed to the Prophet. Whatever signs scholars later determined to be abrogated are still part of the Quran and, therefore, are not relevant to learning to be a Quranic critical thinker, learning HOW to think.

10. The first number that appears when the Quranic Chapters begin refers to the chapter number in the chronological order of the revelation so that Quranic Chapter 110 which was the last to be revealed is number 114 in the chronological order.

11. It is to be noted that whenever the name of Muhammad, Prophet Muhammad or the Prophet are used, one may say a silent prayer of blessings for him.

CRITICAL THINKING• COMPONENT

Quranic critical thinking (furqan, discernment) is a process that analyzes how we think. It is a 3-step process: **I**: Quranic critical thinkers apply the **Nine Intellectual Standards** (logic, being definitive, connected, appropriate, have worthiness, include numerous viewpoints, have right judgment, clarity, being fair and just) to: **II**: **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** (point of view, purpose, questions, information, inferences, concepts, assumptions, im-

plications): in order to develop: **III: The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** (belief in One God (tawhid), God-consciousness (taqwa), virtuous conduct (birr) or integrity through moral discipline, empowering constancy ('azm) and courage, persevering in goodness (sabara), love (hubb) or empathic altruism (ihsan) and being fair and just (rashad). The signs (ayat) in each section (ruku) teach any or every one of the **Nine Intellectual Standards** or any and every one of the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or any or every one of the **Seven Quranic Moral Traits.**

This is the key to critical thinking. We do not learn "what" to think, but, rather, "how" to think. Using the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** as an example, critical thinking can be summarized in the following sentence: Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** and consequences. We use **concepts,** ideas and theories to **interpret information** (data, facts and experiences) in order to **answer questions,** solve problems, and resolve issues.

The point of view in all cases is that of the Quranic message and the various individuals and groups that it addresses as this series is a course in Quranic Studies as well as a course in the chronological history of the life of the blessed Prophet (sira). Each student is encouraged to come up with his or her own questions and responses to those questions in order to learn how to become the Quranic critical thinker as the Quranic teaches us HOW to think.

It is important to note that there is no correct or incorrect answer. The important point is to go through the process with as many of the sections as one is able to do. Little by little, this will help each student or reader to develop into critical thinkers or "discerners" of the Quranic message creating a bond between them and the Quranic message.

Once we learn to analyze signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. It is important to note that the order of **The Nine Intellectual Standards** or **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or **The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** is not important. With the grace of God, once all are present, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behaviors.

THE NINE INTELLECTUAL STANDARDS

1. LOGIC (REASONABLE: 'AQALA, 'AQL)
2. DEFINITIVENESS (TO BE PRECISE: MUHKAMA)
3. CONNECTEDNESS (CONTAINING COMPLEXITIES AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS: (MUQTARIN)
4. APPROPRIATENESS (TO MAKE RELEVANT: SADID)
5. WORTHINESS (FOCUSING ON THE IMPORTANT, NOT TRIVIAL,

to be significant: ahl)
6. Numerous or Multiple Viewpoints: 'dhara'a)
7. Right Judgment (rushd)
8. Clarity (understandable, to be clear: tabayyana)
9. Being Fair and Just ('aql, right-minded (rashad))

The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies

1. **Embodying a Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective (recollect, bear in mind, take for granted: tadhakkur)**
   - Thinking Independently
   - Developing Insight Into Ego-centricity or Socio-centricity
   - Exploring Thoughts Underlying Feelings and Feelings Underlying Thoughts
   - Developing Intellectual Curiosity
2. **Generating a Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective: (consider: ra'a)**
   - Clarifying Issues or Conclusions
   - Clarifying and Analyzing the Meanings of Words or Phrases
   - Reading Critically: Clarifying or Discerning the Sacred Text
   - Listening Critically: The Art of Silent Dialogue
3. **Raising Questions, Problems, Issues: (reflect: tafakkara)**
   - Practicing Discussion: Clarifying and Questioning Interpretations
   - Reasoning Dialogically: Comparing Interpretations
   - Reasoning Dialectically: Evaluating Interpretations Knowledge, Wisdom
   - Deep Questioning
4. **Using Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments (evidence: basirah)**
   - Developing Criteria for Evaluation: Clarifying Values and Standards
   - Analyzing or Evaluating Actions
   - Distinguishing Relevant From Irrelevant Information
   - Giving Reasons and Evaluating Evidence
5. **Making Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusion, Solutions (understanding: tabassur)**
   - Analyzing or Evaluating Arguments and Interpretations
   - Making Plausible Inferences or Interpretations
   - Recognizing Contradictions
   - Noting Significant Similarities and Differences
6. **Utilizing Concepts, Definitions, Principles, Models and Vocabulary (recall: idhdhakara)**
   - Comparing Analogous Situations: Reframing Insights to New Contexts

DEVELOPING ONE'S PERSPECTIVE: CREATING OR EXPLORING ARGUMENTS
MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS
COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE
THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING
7. MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PREPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED (OPINIONS: ZUNUN)
8. GENERATING IMPLICATIONS, CONSEQUENCES (PONDER, EVALUATE: TADABBUR)
GENERATING OR ASSESSING SOLUTIONS
EXPLORING IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES IN DETAIL

1. Embodying a **Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective** (Recollect, Bear in Mind, Take to Heart (*tadhakkur*)):Whenever we think, we think within a point of view. What is the Quranic point of view in these signs? Does the Quran follow universal intellectual values of clarity, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, logic, fairness?

2. Generating a **Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective** (Consider (*ra'a*)): My purpose in addressing the Quranic purpose in these signs is . . .? Know exactly what you are after. Make sure you are not operating with a hidden agenda and that your announced and real purposes are the same. Whenever we think, we think for a purpose. What is the Quran's fundamental purpose in revealing these signs? Are there multiple points of view?

3. Raising **Questions, Problems, Issues** (Reflect (*tafakkara*)): What is the key question I am trying to answer. State the question as clearly and precisely as you can. Details are very important.

4. Using **Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments** (Evidence (*basirah*)): Actively seek the information most relevant to the question. Include in that information options for action, both short-term and long-term. We use experiences, facts and data that the Quran gives us. What information does the Quran give in these signs? What information do I need to answer my question?

5. Making **Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusions, Solutions** (Understanding (*tabassur*)): After reasoning (discerning) the above points, decide what the best answer (conclusion) to the question is. What inferences, judgments or conclusions do these signs make? What are my most fundamental inferences or conclusions based on these Quranic signs?

6. Utilizing **Concepts, Theories, Definitions, Axioms, Laws, Prin-**

ciples, Models, Vocabulary (Recall (*idhdhakara*)): The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are ... ? Figure out all significant ideas needed to understand and answer your question. You may need to analyze these concepts. Use a good dictionary. Inferences or conclusions are based on Quranic concepts and theories. What is the most basic concept in my question? What Quranic terms have I learned?

7. Making **Assumptions, Presuppositions, Taking for Granted** (Opinions (*zunun*)): Some important assumptions I am using in my thinking are ... ? Figure out what you are taking for granted. Watch out for self-serving or unjustified assumptions. The Quranic point of view is based on some assumptions. What assumptions is the Quran using in its reasoning? What assumptions am I using in my reasoning from the Quranic revelation?

8. Generating **Implications, Consequences** (Ponder (*tadabbur*)): Evaluate options. Take into account the advantages and disadvantages of possible decisions before acting? What consequences are likely to follow from this or that decision? The Quranic assumptions and my assumptions lead to implications and consequences. What are the implications of the Quranic reasoning? What are the implications of my reasoning? Am I correct in understanding the Quranic implications?

THE SEVEN QURANIC MORAL TRAITS

1. BELIEF IN ONE GOD (TAWHID)
2. GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (TAQWA)
3. VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE (MORALLY OBLIGATED: QANATA, GOODNESS, BIRR)
4. EMPOWERING CONSTANCY, COURAGE (AZM)
5. PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS (STEADFAST: SABARA)
6. EMPATHIC ALTRUISM (LOVE, MERCY, COMPASSION: HUBB)
7. FAIRNESS (NOT SELF-SERVING OR EGO-CENTRIC: 'AQSATA)

*****

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

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My gratitude also goes to the Center for Critical Thinking and, particularly, the online work done in youtube videos and other works by the educator-founders-members of the Critical Thinking Community, namely, the late Dr. Richard Paul and his wife and constant collaborator, Dr. Linda Elder. All indications of • throughout the text refers to quotes or paraphrases from their excellent work as part of the Critical Thinking Community, www.criticalthinking.org. My attempt has been for all the quotes and paraphrases used here to follow fair copyright use.

Whereas Drs. Paul and Elder may not have used their work in religious educational settings, due to the separation of church and state in the educating of American students, learning from their works it became clear that their teachings can help Muslim students, as well, if their method is presented through the content of the Quran. If Muslim students come to understand that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking, that is, discernment (furqan), HOW to think, they will be armed with the intellectual skills they need to confront Islamic extremism.

One of the main scholars that Islamic extremists use in their propaganda is Seyyed Qutb. In order to further arm Muslim students for any confrontation they may have with Islamic extremists who would quote that their ideas come from Seyyed Qutb, I have used his Quranic commentary, In the Shade of the Quran, in Chapter I of this work. Students will learn how, contrary to what they may be told or taught, in many cases, Seyyed Qutb's commentary (indicated by °) speaks of and describes the way that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking and Islamic extremists cannot say that I have left out their scholars.

Last, but certainly not least, I wish to thank Kazi Publications and its founder, Liaquat Ali, for his constant support and encouragement to forge new areas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqlī*) will be passed to young students as they learn of a Muslim world deeply entrenched in Islamic narrative sciences (*al-naqlī*).

INTRODUCTION
READING THE SIGNS: A QURANIC PERSPECTIVE ON THINKING
BY MOHAMMAD HASHIM KAMALI

The Islamic notion of *aql* (intellect) embraces the faith dimension of knowledge that is also informed by ethical values. The prevailing reading of the Quran on rationality consists of a coalition of faith and reason which is also cognizant of the metaphysical aspect of reality and the limits, therefore, of human reason. This may be said to be a dividing line between the Islamic and Western conceptions of rationality, especially in its post-Enlightenment context.

Thus, it is not accurate to draw a direct parallel between them, as was the case in the Islamic discourse of the colonial period wherein many Muslim writers greatly admired the Western conception of rationality. The twentieth century Islamic discourse has shown awareness of that difference as it began to comprehend the subtleties inherent in the Western lexicon on rationality and its cultural overtones.[1]

THE DIVINE SIGNS (*AYAT*)

The Quran teaches an essential doctrine of the *ayat* (God's signs in the universe) functioning as pointers to the providential purpose at all levels of creation. Thus the Quran makes frequent references such as 'signs for a people who understand—exercise their intellect'. This evidential role of the divine signs entails an accompanying demand placed upon humans to engage in a rational understanding of the signs and draw conclusions on the discovery of truth and correct guidance.

The human reception of the signs, thus, depends ultimately upon the integrity of reason, without which humans would be incapable neither of comprehending the signs nor of responding to their message. The more abundant is an individual's native endowment of reason, the greater is the possibility for him or her to attain a larger magnitude of understanding and a higher level of response.

The nexus between faith and reason thus constitutes the hallmark of intelligent Islamic spirituality, wherein human intellect and emotions are guided toward harmony with one another. The Quran repeatedly provokes its reciters to think about the signs of God in the universe and within themselves, to understand God's illustrious presence in them, and ultimately to vindicate the truth. The word *ayah* and its plural *ayat* occur in the Quran over 400 times, although the whole of the Quran introduces itself as a collection of *ayat*. To quote the Quran: *We will cause them to see Our signs on the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is The Truth.* (41:53) And, *On the earth are signs, for the ones that are certain and in yourselves.*

Will you not, then, perceive? (51:20-51:21)

God reveals the truth in a variety of ways, some explicit and others by allusion, the latter mainly through the modality of the signs, in order to provoke and engage the human intellect. The signs of God cannot be readjust off the face of the signs but require thinking and reflection. This is indicated in the phrase: *We will cause them to see Our signs ...* which suggests that the signs may not be instantaneously visible to the naked eye. The whole concept of signs seeks to forge a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* (38:29) A sign is also a portent and allusion to something other than itself and should not therefore be seen as the final message and purpose of the revelation containing it.

Approximately 750 verses, or nearly one-eighth of the Quran, exhort the readers to study nature, history, the Quran itself, and humanity at large. The text of the Quran employs a range of expressions in its appeal to those who listen (*yasma'un*), those who think (*yatafakkarun*), those who reflect (*yatadabbarun*), those who observe (*yanzurun*), those who exercise their intellect (*ya'qilun*), those who take heed and remember (*yatadhakkarun*), those who ask questions (*yas'alun*), those who develop an insight (*yatafaqqahun*), and those who know (*ya'lamun*).[2]

These and their derivatives (mostly occurring in the active verbal form) consist essentially of open invocations and encouragement to thinking that is not limited by a methodology or framework. *Meditate they not, then, on the Quran* (*afala yatadabbarun al-Qur'an*) (47:24) *Tadabbur* means concentrated and goal-oriented thinking provoked by the challenge to find something new or to solve a difficult problem.

Quranic references to thinking and the exercise of intellect occur in conjunction with basically five major themes: Belief in the Oneness and generosity of God (*tawhid*); reflection on the Quran; the human being and the universe; historical precedent; and thinking itself.

References to *aql* (intellect) and its derivatives occur on 49 occasions in the text. The typical Quranic expression, *ulu'l-albab* (those who possess vision and understanding), and its synonym, *ulu'l-nuha* (people endowed with intellectual abilities) occur 33 times in the text. Such expressions are frequently juxtaposed with the exposition of signs, such as in the sign: *Thus, God makes manifest His signs to you so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (2:242) or in the sign: *Surely, We made manifest the signs to you so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (57:17). Repeated references to pondering over the signs are variously nuanced such that they embrace within their fold the widest spectrum of people who may be endowed with different intellectual abilities and endowments.[3]

Al-Isfahani defines thought (*al-fikr*) as the power of the mind that facilitates access to knowledge (*'ilm*). Thinking (*al-tafakkur*) is the movement of

that power which is driven by the intellect (*al-'aql*), and this can only occur when an initial image of the subject is attainable in the mind of the thinker. Thinking cannot, therefore, proceed over something of which no image exists in the mind. This can be said of the self of God, for example, as we have no image on which to focus our thought.[4]

The human being can only think over the attributes of God through the observation of His signs. Broadly speaking, thinking proceeds over the whole of the created universe without any exception; indeed, the Quran repeatedly invites such in respect to both the physical and abstract aspects of reality, both in the present and in regards to bygone history that is only perceived by the intellect rather than sense perception. Often the Quran gives examples, parables, and narratives of other nations, and then follows them with the reminder, usually addressed to the Prophet, to recount the narratives of the past so that the people may think and reflect over them:

And recount to them the tiding of him to whom We gave Our signs. (7:175)

And there are the parables that We propound for humanity so that perhaps they will reflect. (59:21)

Truly, in that are certainly signs for a folk who reflect. (30:21)

A hierarchy of five perceptive-cognitive functions is also suggested, including and extending through hearing, sight, thinking, dhikr remembrance, and certainty.[5]

Given such a scale of intensified perceptive understanding, the Quran propounds the notion of *ulul'l-albab*, the thoughtful individuals who are possessed of proper understanding and response. *'Aql* is thus tied to the cognitive dimension of faith.

Significantly, the very term for reason and intelligence in Arabic, *al-'aql*, has at the core of its basic meaning the practical idea of "restraining" and "binding," that is, of holding one's self back from blameworthy conduct—being an interior self-imposed limit. Quranic commentators understand thinking (*tafakkur, tafkir*) as pondering and reflection, which is a mental activity and process, not an outcome.

Thinking (*tafakkur*) is considered as a form of worship of God if it is done with sincerity and good purpose. *'Aql* in its Quranic conception is also one that conceives the truth, and it is always in search of it. This conception of *'aql* precludes one that is rigid, arrogant, and misleading. Some have also drawn the conclusion from the ubiquitous Quranic emphasis on thinking that all Muslims must strive to be thinking individuals.[6]

Al-Qaradawi has quoted Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's (d. 751/1350) own observation as well as some epithetic statements, the latter narrated from other leading figures to the effect that "thinking for an hour is better than worship of many years," and another statement that "thinking for an hour is superior to a whole night of prayer." To this Ibn Qayyim added that "thinking is the act of the heart whereas worship is the act of one's limbs, and the former is

superior to the latter."

The pious caliph Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz (d. 101/718) is similarly quoted: Thinking over the bounties of God is the best form of worship. Abbas Mahmud al-Agqad went so far as to say that: Thinking—*al-tafkir*—is an Islamic obligation. Just as God Most High ordered us to worship Him by performing prayer and fasting, He also ordered us to think in numerous verses and in so many different ways, all of which vindicate thinking as one of the cardinal messages of the Quran.[7]

The Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge espoused with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression *al-tafaqquh fi'l-din*, that is, understands the religion, signifying a rational and inquisitive approach to constructing a Quranic worldview.

Islam, in other words, advises analytical knowledge and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely dogmatic approach. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions: Faith based on detailed analysis (*al-iman al-tafsili*) as opposed to undigested and uncomprehended faith (*al-iman al-ijmali*). The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the religious scholars of all the leading schools of thought. Thus it is declared in a sign: *But a section of people only that they become learned in the way of life and that they warn their folk.* (9:122).

We also note the distinction between thought-based knowledge and transmitted or received knowledge reflected in the twin juristic and hadith-related expressions of knowledge based on understanding (*'ilm al-diraya*), and report-based and transmitted knowledge (*'ilm al-riwaya*). The former is based on understanding and insight (*diraya wa tafaqquh*) and takes priority over the latter. Whereas *'ilm al-riwaya* relies mainly on memory and retention, *'ilm al-diraya* is based on cognition, understanding, and analysis.

Thus, if there are hadith reports, or any factual reports for that matter, which do not stand to reason and understanding, they would be most likely discounted and abandoned, with the exception only of devotional matters (*'ibadat*) which are based on faith and submission more than on rational analysis.

Another feature of the Quranic vision of thinking is indicated in its emphasis on wisdom and good judgment (*hikmah*) which signifies the quality of thinking, its regard for values, and its outcome. Wisdom and good judgment can easily be said to be more important than technical know-how and expertise, as it can guide expert knowledge as to its proper application and the attainment of excellence.

The Quran mentions *hikmah* twenty times, and in about ten of these it is immediately preceded by the word Book or *kitab*, which is a reference to di-

vine scripture—primarily the Quran, but also other divinely revealed scriptures. The text, thus, says with reference to Jesus: *And He teaches him the Book and wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel.* (3:48) The juxtaposition of *kitab* and *hikmah* is often contextualized by a reference to the sending of prophets who teach the people and guide them with scripture and wisdom (e.g., *wa yu'allimuhum al-kitaba wa'l-hikmata*) as it is said of the Prophet Muhammad: *And teaches you the Book and wisdom* (2:159) and: *Teaches them the Book and wisdom* (62:2 ff); the descendants of Prophet Abraham: *We gave the people of Abraham the Book and wisdom* (4:54); and of Luqman: *We gave Luqman wisdom* (31:12). The holistic, superior, and indivisible value of *hikmah* in the Quran is underscored in one of its signs to the effect that when God bestows wisdom on someone that person is indeed granted an immense source of goodness: *And whomever is given wisdom, then, surely, was given much good and none recollects no doubt but those imbued with intuition.* (2:269).

To mention *hikmah* together with the Book evidently means that the Quran should be read with wisdom and divorcing the one from the other by taking a totally dogmatic approach to the Quran goes against the divine purpose and intention of its revelation. To read the Quran in the light of *hikmah* thus means a comprehensive reading that reaches beyond the obvious meaning of its words to encapsulate the goal and purpose of its message and then also reflection on the ways and means of how its benefits can be realized for the individual and society.[8]

The repeated juxtaposition of the "Book and *Hikmah*" in the Quran led some commentators, such as the Successor, Qatadah ibn Diama al-Sadusi (d.118 H), Ibn Wahhab, the disciple of Imam Malik (d. 179/795), and the Imam al-Shafii (d. 205/820) himself to the somewhat unusual observation that "*hikmah*" is a reference to the Sunna of the Prophet. Many have taken and followed this view; but since the text does not specify such a meaning for *hikmah*, the word should convey its natural and unqualified meaning as I have depicted in this presentation.

Good judgment, insight, balance and avoidance of extremes, the ability to distinguish between truth and falsehood, and procedural accuracy are commonly associated with *hikmah* and *hikmah* as such becomes a dimension of evaluative thinking in. its Quranic idiom. Besides, when the Quran declares that God Most High endowed the Prophets David and Solomon and also the renowned sage Luqman with *hikmah*, it could not have referred to the Sunna of the Prophet Muhammad, as Sunna as such did not exist in those times.

The Quranic usage of *hikmah* reinforces the holistic quality of thinking. *Hikmah* also seeks to forge a close tie between reason and emotion (*'aql wa qalb*) thereby encouraging what is now known as emotional intelligence. This is how the Quran and also the Sunna often deliver their messages, for, unlike the modern statutory laws and texts, the Quranic guidance, commands, and

prohibitions are often espoused with appeals to the heart and mind of their readers.[9]

Al-Isfahani defined *hikmah* as the realization of the truth through knowledge and intellect and it is manifested in the performance of benevolent deeds.[10] According to another definition: Wisdom signifies comprehension of the truth and reality and the ability to avoid corruption in one's quest to attain perfection."[11]

Random House Dictionary of the English Language similarly defines wisdom as: Knowledge of what is true or right coupled with just judgment as to action. Wisdom is thinking informed by the light of the heart that often leads to action and contemplates its consequences in relationship with other relevant factors. This may strike a note with the renowned hadith in which it is declared that: Fearing God is the pinnacle of wisdom (*ra's al-hikmati makhafat Allah*)."[12]

It is presumably for this reason that the great religions of the world have urged the seekers of knowledge to combine it with wisdom. It is wisdom that confers a higher quality on thinking and helps knowledge to be used for the promotion of good giving it meaning and direction.

In an effort to train the individual to enhance his or her quality of thinking, al-Ghazali (d. 505/1111) discusses the two sources of knowledge that Muslim tradition has recognized. One of these is through human teaching and learning (*al-ta'allum al-insani*) and the other through divine teaching (*al-ta'lim al-rabbani*).

The former is externally transmitted from teacher to student, whereas the latter is conveyed by the Universal Intellect which is superior, more intense, and more effective than human teaching. This knowledge is internally acquired either through revelation (*wahy*), which is a prerogative of the Prophets, or it is acquired through meditation, thinking, and reflection.

Al-Ghazali subscribes to the view that the essence of all knowledge is centered in the inner self of the human person in much the same way as growth potential that is vested in the soil and seed, and it is through teaching that the individual's potential is developed.[13] These two aspects of knowledge, that is, the external and the internal, are complementary to one another. This is because no one can possibly teach or learn from any teacher all the sciences, some of which are learned through teaching but the rest inferred by the reflective thought of the individual. It is therefore important that the avenues of learning remain open both through teaching and through inner reflection, thinking, and illumination. This is another way of saying that all knowledge is acquired and developed through the senses, inner reflection and thinking, both of which partake in natural endowment and development through external transmission and teaching.

Al-Ghazali's views on the internal and external sources of knowledge tended to correspond with those of Ibn Sina (d. 428/1037), but which differed,

at least partially, from those of the second/ninth century Ikhwan al-Safa (c. 373/983). All knowledge, according to the latter, is acquired through the senses and none inheres in human nature. Knowledge that is developed through thought and reflection also originate in the senses. The same analysis is extended to the axiomatic knowledge of postulates that are derived and confirmed through the senses. In support of this theory Ikhwan al-Safa have cited the Quranic verse: *And God brought you out from the wombs of your mothers and you know nothing.* (16:78). All knowledge is therefore acquired knowledge, a view which may strike a closer note with some of the modern theories on the subject.[14]

Muslim thought in the middle ages did not admit the ontological distinction between tangible entities that could be sensuously apprehended and entities of a spiritual or subliminal nature. This may be said to be a more sound and realistic view of reality than is allowed for by the modern positivist doctrines of science. Being is manifested at various levels and in several forms, none of which is less real than the other. Arabic thought employed the notions systematized in Stoic theory that divide being into three locations: Verbal utterance, psychic representation, and reality—without this last in any sense having exclusive title to Being.

Al-Farabi (d. 950 CE) took up this view and assimilated psychic representation to the entities of reason. Others rehearsed this division with the addition of a fourth location, that of Scripture. Reality thus had a four-fold manifestation, depending on whether the subject existed immediately in itself or whether its like was graven in the mind (*dhihn*, psyche) composed of sounds, which together indicates the psychic representation, or was manifested in characters standing for sound and speech. All four have a basic characteristic in common which is existence (*wujud, haqiqah*).[15]

The Islamic and Western perceptions of creative and evaluative thinking both recognize this to be a skill that is developed through training and controlled exercise. It is through training and thinking that we adopt new patterns of perceiving reality that we are able to see differently and creatively. It is generally acceded that creative thinking and critical thinking go hand-in-hand and complement one another. Critical thinking means "involving or exercising skilled judgment or observation." Thinking is critical when it evaluates the reasoning behind a decision. Such evaluation must, however, be carried forth in a constructive manner.[16]

The purpose of critical thinking is to achieve understanding, evaluate viewpoints, and solve problems. In general, one's thinking is likely to become critical when concrete learning experiences precede abstract thought.[17] This strikes a parallel note, in its Islamic idiom, with thinking that is espoused with *hikmah*.

The famous yet controverted hadith: The first (being) God created is the intelligence (*awwalu ma khalaqa Allahu al-'aqla*), sparked prolonged discus-

sions among Muslim thinkers over many centuries over the implications of this statement. Among the issues debated was the priority of reason over revelation and the respective role of each in their mutual inter-dependence.

Another issue was whether the disparity among humans in respect of reason also affected the modalities of moral obligation. Some prominent thinkers including Abu Bakr al-Razi (d. 313/925) apparently advocated the primacy of reason over the revelation. This would be properly known as "rationalism," which deems the primacy of reason over revelation. This is different from "rationality" which means treating any issue by using reason without giving reason priority.

SOURCES AND INSTRUMENTS OF KNOWLEDGE

Commenting on the Quranic passage quoted earlier, Muhammad Iqbal observed that the Quran regards both self (*anfus*) and world (*afaq*) as sources of knowledge. God reveals His signs in inner as well as outer experience. The Quran thus opens fresh vistas of knowledge in the domain of our inner experience. Mystic experience and intuition, then, however unusual and abnormal, must now be regarded as perfectly natural and open to scrutiny like other aspects of human experience." But inner experience is only one source of human knowledge. The outer experience in the Quran, Iqbal continues on the same page, unfolds two other sources of knowledge—nature and history, and it is in tapping these sources of knowledge that "the spirit of Islam is seen at its best".

The Quran sees the signs of reality in the sun, the moon, the alternation of day and night, the perpetual changes of the winds, the variety of human colors and tongues, and in fact in the whole of nature as revealed to the sense-perception of man. The Muslim's duty is to reflect on these signs and not to pass by them as if he is deaf and blind *They have hearts with which they understand not. And they have eyes with which they perceive not. And they have ears with which they hear not. Those are like flocks. Nay! They are ones who go astray. Those, they are the ones who are heedless* (7:179), for he who does not see these signs in this life will remain blind to the realities of the life to come. The divine signs are observed through sense-perception using mainly the faculties of hearing, sight, and intellect: *Journey they not through the earth? Have they not hearts with which to be reasonable or ears with which to hear?* (22:46) The emphasis in this sign is on the faculty of reason and understanding, suggesting that not all of our information about nature comes directly from sensation, for if that were the case we would be no different from animals.

Frequent references to sense-perception as the principal mode of receiving the signs show the scientific/experimental import of the Quran. The Quran goes even further to suggest sense perception as the only avenue of knowledge, as the text already reviewed provides: *And God brought you out from*

the wombs of your mothers and you know nothing. And He assigned to you the ability to hear and sight and mind so that perhaps you will give thanks. (16:78) Knowledge of the signs is therefore acquired through the use of these faculties. In another sign, the Quran praises those who listen to the word and follow the best of it: *Those who listen to the saying of the Quran and follow the fairer of it. Those are those whom God guided. And those, they are imbued with intuition.* (or make the best possible interpretation thereof) (39:18). This sign apparently subjects the data of sense-perception to the exercise of intellectual selection. The text also teaches that sense-perception does not perceive all reality: *So I swear an oath by what you perceive and what you perceive not.* (69:37-69:38). Certainty (*yaqin*) may also be beyond the reach of human intellect, as the human mind may be blurred by the variables of time and space. What is deemed certain today may be uncertain tomorrow.

We also note that according to the teachings of the Quran, the universe is dynamic in its origin, finite, and capable of increase. Early Muslim thinkers do not seem to have grasped the Quranic emphasis on inductive reasoning and experimentation. It was indeed a slow realization for Muslim thinkers to note "that the spirit of the Quran was essentially anti-classical". Putting full confidence in Greek reasoning, Muslim thinkers tried to understand the Quran in the light of Greek philosophy, which in the beginning of their careers they had studied with so much enthusiasm.

The substance of Iqbal's analysis on this subject is also upheld by Malik bin Nabi (1905-1973), who understands the creative impulse of the Quran as the motivating force behind the efflorescence of science at a time when Muslim thinkers began to grasp the full impact of the Quran on experimentation and inductive reasoning.[18]

The dynamic conception of the universe in the Quran is also seen by its conception of life as an evolutionary movement in time. History thus constitutes the third source of knowledge in the Quran. It is one of the most essential teachings of the Quran, as Iqbal has further observed, that nations are collectively judged, and suffer for their misdeeds here and now. The Quran thus constantly cites historical instances, and urges upon the reader to reflect on the past and present experiences of humanity: *Customs passed away before you. So journey through the earth; then, look on how had been the Ultimate End of the ones who deny.* (3:137)

If a wound afflicts you, surely, a wound afflicted the folk similar to that. And these are the days We rotate among humanity so that God knows those who believed and takes witnesses to Himself from among you. (3:140)

And: *And of whom We created there is a community that guides with The Truth, and with it, it is just. And those who denied Our signs, We will draw them on gradually from where they will not know.* (7:181-183)

The Quran's interest in history as a source of human knowledge extends farther than mere indication of historical generalizations. "It has given us one

of the most fundamental principles of historical criticism."[19] Since accuracy in recording facts is an indispensable condition of history as a science, accuracy depends ultimately on those who report them. The reporter's personal character is thus an important factor in judging his testimony. The Quran says *O those who believed! If one who disobeys drew near to you with a tiding, then, be clear so that you not light on a folk out of ignorance.* (49:6). It is the application of the principle embodied in this sign to the reporters of the Prophet's traditions out of which were gradually evolved the canons of historical criticism.

A scientific treatment of history, however, requires a wider experience, a greater maturity of practical reason, and a fuller realization of certain basic ideas regarding the nature of life and time. These are in the main three, and taken together they constitute the foundation of Quranic teaching.

(1) The unity of human origin: The Quran states: *He creates you from one soul.* (39:6) And: *O humanity! Be God-conscious of your Lord Who created you from a single soul.* (4:1). But the perception of life as an organic unity is a slow achievement. Islam sowed the germ of this aspiration and it became a Quranic assignment of us to work towards its realization. Notwithstanding the fact that Christianity, long before Islam, brought the message of equality to humanity, the Roman Empire had no more than a general and abstract conception of human unity.

On the other hand, the growth of territorial nationalism in Europe has tended to stifle the broad human element in the art and literature of Europe. European colonialism was also inspired by a self-image of superiority. Europe assumed a superior image that non-European peoples could be freely dominated, exploited, and subjugated.[20] It was quite otherwise with Islam. The impulse of Islam was from the outset to make the idea of human unity a living factor in the Muslim experience that was to be taken towards fuller fruition.

(2) A keen sense of the reality of time, and the concept of life as a continuous movement in time: The Quranic view of the alternation of day and night as a sign of the ultimate Reality which appears in a fresh glory every moment and the tendency in Muslim metaphysics to regard time as objective—all this constituted the intellectual heritage and ideals of Islam.

(3) The merger between religious and secular values: This is a unique feature of Islamic thought which is distinguished by its attempt to bring harmony between them, probably for the first time in history. It was in the state of Madinah that we encounter a clear example where universally proclaimed moral values formed the criteria of political judgment. Political leaders and statesmen were expected to recognize not only the value of efficiency, but also of justice, human dignity, equality, and freedom. In his renowned *Philosophy of History*, Hegel (1770-1831) recognized that the unity between the secular and the spiritual took place in Islamic society and civilization long before it made any impact in the modern West: We must therefore regard (the

reconciliation between the secular and spiritual) as commencing rather in the enormous contrast between the spiritual religious principles, and the barbarian Real World. For spirit as the consciousness of an inner world is, at the commencement, itself still in the abstract form. All that is secular is consequently given over to rudeness and capricious violence. The (Muslim) principle, the enlightenment of the oriental world, is the first to contravene this barbarism and caprice. We find it developing itself later and more rapidly than Christianity; for the latter needed eight centuries to grow into a political form.[21]

The modern West followed the example of the historical Islamic world in demanding that holders of political power operate under a set of moral rules. But as the modern West harmonized the secular and religious only nationally, the international realm was free to operate under the dynamics of power politics and secular rudeness. This failure was a cause of the senseless violence that claimed over 100 million war victims in the twentieth century. Recognition of the danger of the purely secular politics led to the creation of the United Nations, yet even this effort was undermined by political realists who enjoyed a disproportionate sway among the political pundits of Europe and America.

Safi has rightly noted the irony that contemporary Muslim societies have unfortunately followed a similar course in decoupling the secular and the religious and now find themselves entangled in a crisis of legitimacy. Many Muslim regimes are driven by the logic of power and operate outside the realm of moral correctness. It is alarming to see that this decoupling has impacted the religiously inspired movements, which seem to succumb to the logic of power in their readiness to employ amoral--even immoral--strategies in their fight against political corruption and oppression.[22]

Obstacles to Correct Reasoning

The Quranic emphasis on pondering over the signs is also underscored by a set of guidelines to ensure a correct outcome of reflection and thinking over them. The text thus draws attention to a series of exclusions and factors that stand in the way of the proper functioning of intellect:

(1) Pursuit of caprice (*hawa*) which may consist of love, hatred, pomposity and prejudice that confound impartiality and sound judgment: *Had you considered he who took to himself his own desire as his god and whom God caused to go astray out of a knowledge, sealed over his having the ability to hear and his heart and laid a blindfold on his sight? Who, then, will guide him after God? Will you not, then, recollect?* (45:23)

And if you had followed their desires after what drew near you of the knowledge, there is not for you from God either a protector or a helper. (2:120)

But if they respond not to you, then, know that they only follow their own desires. (28:50)

And: *And obey not him whose heart We made neglectful of Our Remembrance and who followed his own desires and whose affair had been excess.* (18:28)

The choice is between two alternatives: caprice (*hawa*) and guidance (*huda*); the former evidently renders obscure one's attempt to attain the latter.

(2) Pursuit of conjecture in the face of certitude: And surely conjecture (*al-zann*) avails nothing against the truth (*al-Haqq*). *And most of them follow nothing but opinion. Truly, opinion avails them not against The Truth at all.* (10:36)

And follow up not of what there is not for you knowledge of it. Truly, having the ability to hear and sight and mind, each of those will have been that which is asked. (17:36) Knowledge and truth stand in contradistinction with the pursuit of conjecture. Note that the text says one should not follow conjecture until it is established and elevated to the rank of knowledge. It does not say that one should avoid conjecture altogether. In another place, conjecture occurs side by side with *hawa* or that which they themselves desire: *They follow nothing but opinion and that for which their souls yearn.* (53:23) This is the kind of conjecture or opinion that is meant.

Knowledge is established by sense-perception that often begins with a measure of speculation and doubt but which is affirmed by the light of reason and conviction. Some commentators maintain that the main context for this guideline is religion: Thus it is said that one should not take speculative positions in matters of belief. As for scientific enquiry and pursuit of knowledge, conjecture is neither discouraged nor avoidable.[23]

The ultimate purpose of this engagement is to attain the truth. Once the truth is attained, one should then commit oneself to it and observe it: *And what else is there after The Truth but wandering astray. Where, then, turn you away?* (10:32)

Completed was the Word of your Lord in sincerity and justice. There is no one who changes His Words. (54) (6:115).

(3) Blind imitation of others: The correct exercise of reason in Islam is tied to personal conviction as opposed to indiscriminate following of others, hallowed custom, and precedent. These must be judged in the light of reason and abandoned if found deviant and misleading: The misguided will say, as the Quran provides: *Nay! We will follow whatever we discovered our fathers were following on it —even though their fathers had been not at all reasonable—nor are they truly guided.* (2:170)

And: *Enough is what we found our fathers upon. Even though their fathers had been knowing nothing nor are they truly guided?* (5:104)

This was the response that Prophet Abraham and other great prophets received from their detractors, but the text address them again and again that both you and your ancestors were clearly misguided. *Certainly, We gave Abraham his right judgment before. And We had been ones who know of him when he said to his father and his folk: What are these images to which you be ones who give yourselves up to? They said: We found our fathers as ones who are worshippers of them. He said: Certainly, you and your fathers had been in a*

clear wandering astray.(21:51-21:54)

Forsake those who took to themselves their way of life as a pastime and as a diversion and whom this present life deluded. (6:70)

*Is it that **your** formal prayer commands **you** that we leave what our fathers worship?* (11:87)

As we shall presently elaborate, indiscriminate imitation of others is widely held to be the single most damaging cause of the decline of creative thinking among Muslims.

(4) Oppressive Dictatorship: The Quran takes to task arrogant dictators and those who support them and follow them. Hence the plea of those who say: *Our Lord! Truly, we obeyed our chiefs and our great ones. They caused us to go astray from the way* (33:66) should be of no merit. In a number of other places the text denounces the Pharaoh and Karun for their oppressive ways who misled their people in rejecting the guidance that was conveyed to them. *Pharaoh and his Council but they followed the command of Pharaoh. And the command of Pharaoh was not well-intended.* (11:96)

DECLINE OF CRITICAL THINKING

I shall not retrace well-documented history that Muslim thinkers were pioneers in the creation of new knowledge. It was due to the impact of the Quran that, in contrast to the Greeks who excelled in deductive method of reasoning and logic, Muslim scientists distinguished themselves in inductive and experimental approaches to scientific enquiry. The golden period of Muslim science started around 700 AD and lasted until about 1350 AD. Great thinkers such as Ibn Sina, Jabir ibn Hayyan, Abu Bakr Zakarriya al-Razi, Abu Rayhan al-Biruni, Ibn al-Nafis al-Dimashgi, al-Khawarizmi, and many others have left a rich legacy of contributions to the advancement of sciences in anatomy, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, optics, etc.[24]

After the fourteenth century creative thinking began to decline in the Islamic world due to a variety of factors, including the Mongol invasion and burning of Baghdad, the defeat of the Muslim Arabs in Spain and the continuing crusades, the collapse of the Ottoman caliphate, and the ensuing onslaught of European colonialism. The creative impulse of Islamic thought suffered setbacks as a result. Muslims were also beset with many internal problems including the alienation of philosophers, scientists, and thinkers from the theologians, sectarian controversies, and the prevalence of intellectual conservatism and imitation of past authority (*taqlid*)).

Philosophy and the sciences fell into a rapid decline while more rigid forms of instruction and narrower curricula prevailed. It was argued that orthodoxy was being threatened and that there was a need to restrain thinkers in order to defend religion. The latitude and diversity of discourse that expanded the scope of religious sciences, theology (*kalam*), commentary (*tafsir*), hadith, and jurisprudence (*fiqh*) gave way to narrower criteria of *kufr*, *bidah*, and

taqlid and the so-called closing of the door of *ijtihad* (*sadd bab al-ijtihad*).[25]

More recently, a certain abuse of Islamic authority operated by a dogmatic radicalism has exacerbated the decline of creative thought among Muslims. The situation is not helped by the prevalence of passivity in popular culture concerning the dogmatic excesses of these ardent proponents of imitation of past authority (*taqlid*). One of the salient features of this mindset is a certain ignorance of the essential impulse of the Quran on creative thought. Malik bin Nabi put it succinctly that the crisis of a civilization and a society at a critical point of its history "is not the paucity of its material objects but the poverty of its ideas."[26]

WHAT IS *IJTIHAD*?

The Quranic appeal to rational thinking and enquiry is not restrained by the methodology of *ijtihad*. There is, in fact, no clear text on *ijtihad*[27] in the Quran. *Ijtihad* as a concept originates in the hadith of the Prophet and the practice and precedent of companions. The methodology of *ijtihad* which is the basic theme of the science of the sources of law (i.e. *usul al-fiqh*) is itself a product of *ijtihad*. It seems that the Prophet also saw *ijtihad* as a creative impulse rather than engaging in the technicalities of legal reasoning—as the *usul al-fiqh* later developed in abundance. When the Prophet spoke of *ijtihad* or when he approved of its application, he seems to have done so in terms of *ijtihad* qua creative thinking.

One would readily admit that imposing restrictions on thinking, even if it were possible, by cultures and legal traditions could be exaggerated, in which case it would be prone to acquiring negative dimensions. One would not, on the other hand, advocate free thinking that is not limited by some kind of goal-orientation and values. Even the actual process of creative thinking, as earlier noted, is a skill that could be learned and refined by stages to direct it into productive avenues. The liberal tradition of the West tends to impose minimal restrictions on thinking whereas Islam tends to take a more guided approach to creative reasoning. Whereas both the Islamic and Western traditions recognize the authority of reason as a criterion of judgment, the liberal tradition has, unlike Islam, isolated spirituality and faith from the ambit of scientific rationality.

However, the methodology of *ijtihad* was also influenced in the course of time by a variety of factors, including the political climate, the change of caliphate (*khilafah*) to monarchy (*mulk*), Hellenistic thought in relationship to analogy (*qiyas*) and its syllogistic components, and the rift between the religious scholars and ruling authorities.[28]

Usul al-fiqh and its proposed methodology followed a difficult course and became embroiled in technicality that had adverse consequences for *ijtihad*. What is needed now is to recapture the purity of this vital concept, to make *ijtihad* as our principal instrument for originality and healthy adjustment,

but also to revise and reform some aspects of the theory of *ijtihad* itself that are no longer responsive to the prevailing conditions and challenges of our time.

I have elsewhere discussed the theory of *ijtihad* and its related issues and space here does not permit engagement in detail.[29] Yet I conclude this section by suggesting, however briefly, that the conventional theory of *ijtihad* needs to be revised and reformed in respect of the need:

1) to recognize the validity of collective and consultative *ijtihad* (*ijtihad jama'i*) side by side with that of *ijtihad* by individual scholars;

2) to allow experts in other fields such as science, economics, and medicine to carry out *ijtihad* in their respective fields if they are equipped with adequate knowledge of the source evidence of Islam. They may alternatively sit together with, or seek advice from, those learned in *Shariah*.

Ijtihad has in the past been often used as an instrument of diversity and disagreement rather than of unity and consensus. Although disagreement must admittedly be allowed in principle, yet there is a greater need today for unity and consensus. Scholars and learned bodies should not perhaps encourage excessive engagement in diversity of schools and sects but try to find ways that would help to close the gap between them and encourage unity on principles. This may require policy guidelines for different settings and countries, and, if so, that should be reflected in our approaches to *ijtihad*. Certain guidelines may also be provided by thinkers and leaders to stimulate consensus-oriented *ijtihad* within the ranks of the judiciary and legislative assemblies.

Ijtihad has in the past been conceived basically as a legal concept and methodology. Our understanding of the source evidence on *ijtihad* does not specify such a framework for *ijtihad*. Rather, we think of the original conception of *ijtihad* as a problem-solving formula for the problems encountered by individual Muslims and the Muslim community. This would confirm our view of the need to broaden the scope of *ijtihad* to other disciplines beyond the framework of *fiqh* and *usul al-fiqh*.

According to a legal maxim of Islamic jurisprudence, there should be no *ijtihad* in the presence of a clear text of the Quran and Hadith (*la ijtihad ma'al-nass*). This maxim should also be revised. This is because of the possibility that the text in question could now be seen in a different light and given a fresh interpretation in a different context. What we are saying is that the legal text may need to be understood first and that by itself may involve *ijtihad*. Hence *ijtihad* may not be precluded if it could advance a fresh understanding of the text in the first place.

The persistent decline of critical reason among Muslims is due partly to the notion that the exercise of personal judgment and *ijtihad* ceased with the epoch-making works of the legists and imams of the past. Added to this is the prevailing mindset that a Muslim should follow one or the other of the established schools of thought and abandon his judgment in favor of interpretations

of the earlier centuries whose originators could have no conception of the necessities of the twenty-first century Muslims. Until about 1500 CE, independent *ijtihad* allowed Muslims and Muslim societies to continually adapt in the face of changing societal conditions and new advances in knowledge.

Unfortunately, as Muslim civilization began to weaken about four centuries ago in the face of Western advances, Muslims began to adopt a more conservative stance in an attempt to preserve traditional values and institutions. As a result Muslim thinkers became inclined to view innovation and adaptation negatively. For all the rhetoric and symbolic form of the neo-radicals that tend to dominate the audience of Muslims, the spirit of Islam is often palpably missing from their endeavors, while more than ever *ijtihad* is needed where women, education, and politics are concerned.

ISLAM AND THE WEST

Scientific rationality essentially reduces intelligence to the level of neural chemistry where mental and behavioral phenomena are understood merely as manifestations of physical processes. It tends to deprive us of our noblest dimensions (faith, love, beauty), separates the soul from the body, and the sensory from the intelligible. In the realm of economics, we are merely a producer and consumer of goods and is moved solely by our individual self-interest. This too is opposed to the Islamic viewpoint which also sees in us morality and transcendent faith.

This physicalist analysis of intelligence is now increasingly being seen as conceptually inadequate. The real question is whether one may admit a human dimension which is autonomous and irreducible to a physical mass. In Moravia's phrase "can one posit something which exists and yet at the same time is non physical? Do the rejection of the soul and the achievements attained by bio and neurosciences oblige us to hold that man is nothing but body?"[30] Recently these have been attempted by some creative thinkers to reconceptualize intentions of 'reason' and 'intelligence' along anti-materialistic lines drawing on the experience of older non-Western traditions, or even popular folk conceptions.[31]

Islamic philosophy—which mainly studies purposes, as against science which mainly studies causes—sees, in line with the Quranic teaching, the role of objects and events as signs of divine presence and action. Faith is understood by Muslims not as a limitation on science but as its vista for enrichment and perfection.[32]

The variant perspectives of Western philosophy and science are also behind the Western puzzlement why Muslims have not become more secularized. This unwarranted assumption has in the past led to mistaken assessments of Islam and continues to foster genuine misunderstanding concerning the real nature of Islamic religion and intellectual traditions. The misunderstanding is unfortunately not unique to Westerners. For the majority of Muslims today

are also woefully uninformed of the depth and scope of their rich heritage on the authoritative validity of reason. Thinking Muslims should work to vindicate the symbiotic relation of faith and reason in their religion and see it as a source of enrichment and contribution of Islam to human understanding and civilization.

CONCLUSION

This essay advanced a Quranic perspective on thinking, which is affirmative in critical and goal-oriented thinking and also provides a set of guidelines that ensures its purity and purpose from negative reductionist influences. The guidelines so provided are also rich in advancing a spiritual dimension with the understanding that thinking which is not informed by morality and faith can lose its direction and purpose and can even become harmful to human welfare. From the Quranic vantage point, the sciences of nature should be key to our cognition of the signs of God in the universe. For this may be instrumental in solving individual and social problems without interrupting the cosmic order and the human habitat on earth. The blatant disregard of ethical values in science has weakened scientists' sense of responsibility and contributed to the degradation of the human condition on the globe.

Since thinking is a skill that can be advanced by self-application and training, it is amenable to guidance, bereavement, and enrichment. Universities and institutions of learning in Muslim countries are generally short of resources, and those who have the means still fall short, to their detriment, of nurturing the culture of reading and research among their students and scholars. Centers of higher learning may do well to establish a new order of relationship between the natural sciences and humanities, and between all fields of knowledge and human welfare and also the avenues of benefit to society. The present-day education system is due for a reappraisal in order to instill creative thinking and breadth of vision among students and scholars that is informed by the inter-relatedness of the various disciplines of learning. This could be done, as one observer suggested, "by adding sufficient number of courses in humanities to the science and engineering curricula, by cross-disciplinary interaction and collaboration."[33] The main characteristic of the human sciences, from the Islamic perspective, is that they are not value-free and have to be incorporated within the value system of Islam that is informed by the ethical and human dimension of values.

It is ironic to note, however, that the vast majority of Muslims are wont to rote reading of the Quran which is patently vacuous and devoid of thinking. The Quran is usually read, committed to memory, and cited for its spiritual merit rather than intellectual stimulation and enrichment. This is evidently not the advice one obtains from the Quran itself Al-Qaradawi has rightly observed about the current realities of public education in Muslim countries that "the system relies on memorization and cramming more than it does on compre-

hension and analysis. A typical weakness of this method is that the memorizer forgets as soon as the exams are over. But if what is learned is founded in understanding and comprehension, its substance will remain in the mind and will not be prone to oblivion so quickly."[34]

But the issue that we raise here is well-entrenched and originates in the overall emphasis that most educationists and jurists of earlier times have placed on the study of the Quran, Hadith and *fiqh* manuals, often calling attention to words and sentences of the text at the expense of comprehension and analysis. The basic approach to Quran studies thus emphasized correct pronunciation and memorization. This repetitive system of learning was particularly pronounced in the context of child education, although it was not confined to this framework as other and more advanced levels of Islamic scholarship also bore the same influence.[35]

Notwithstanding the profound influence of the Quran on the thoughts, mores, and cultures of Muslim individuals and societies, thinking by its nature does not lend itself to any predetermined framework and guideline. It seems that the Quran also seeks only to provide signs and signposts on thinking, but the subjective and innately individual bent of thinking is often inspired by imagination and insight which cannot be encapsulated by definitions and guidelines. A creative mind is unique by its attributes, and thinking that originates in a learned and upright individual is one of the greatest gifts of creation that can itself fit the description of divine example, or sign, of God on earth.

It remains to be added though that imaginative thinking has also been sparkled by sources and influences among great Muslim thinkers of other cultures and traditions—just as we note also that the great thinkers of history emerged in all regions, cultures, and religions. The substance of these statements is upheld in a renowned Hadith in which the Prophet instructed the Muslims to "seek knowledge, even unto China," and in another Hadith that "wisdom is the lost property of the believer; he is entitled to it wherever he finds it."

Knowledge and wisdom must therefore be ultimately seen as the shared achievements of humanity, endowed and posited by its outstanding and creative thinkers. This is also known from the fact that the outcomes of creative thinking are often shared and experienced far beyond geographical locales and frontiers—more so perhaps in the age of globalization.

It is hoped that the great thinkers and leaders of humanity make it a part of their agenda and commitment to narrow down the distances and divides between the intellectual and cultural traditions of the world and aspire them to the veritable vision of a shared destiny and wider human fraternity in their deliberations.

Mohammad Hashim Kamali[36]

PREVIEW *BOOK YEAR 7*

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

The Lessons in *Book Year 1* through *Book Year 24*, including *Book Year 7* presented here, are numbered consecutively in order of the revelation of a Quranic Chapter. Here, in *Book Year 7*, we begin with Lesson 55, that is, Quran Chapter 6 which is the 55th Chapter revealed followed by Quranic Chapter 37, Lesson 56.

The chronological order of the chapters of the Quran that follow throughout the series is based on the list accepted by al-Azhar University in Cairo[1] and is considered to be the official order. It differs greatly from the chronological order developed by Western scholars over the centuries and is much more detailed.

Quranic signs or verses (*ayat*) of each section (*ruku*) in a particular Quranic chapter are given in each lesson followed by a commentary. A short paragraph describes the Eight Elements of Reason and then a paragraph titled Example of How Quranic Critical Thinking Works. The paragraph that comes after this is for the student to determine which of the statements are one of the Eight Elements of Reasoning. Each Lesson ends with a Student Self-assessment.

We do not have a great deal of detailed information about the life of the Prophet Muhammad during the Makkah period. The information that we have falls in the various lessons. Appendix 1 correlates the original Quranic chapters with their chronological order.

LESSON 55(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
DEVELOPING INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY

The development of an attitude of intellectual curiosity is of prime importance in learning how to become a Quranic critical thinker. Quranic thinkers need to be curious about their environment. They need to seek explanations of apparent discrepancies. They need to speculate as to possible causes of these discrepancies. In short, they need to be predisposed to wonder about the world around them. This sense of wonder, this intellectual curiosity that seeks explanations and offers solutions, is something that can be and needs to be encouraged and developed.

HISTORY

Ibn Ishaq says regarding 6:8: I have heard that the Messenger passed by al-Walid ibn al-Mughayra and Umayya ibn Khalaf and Abu Jahl ibn Hisham and they reviled and mocked him, and this caused him distress. So God sent down to him concerning this: (6:10)

The Messenger called his people to the Quranic message and preached to them: To Zamaa ibn al-Aswad, al-Nadr ibn al-Harith, al-Aswad ibn Abd al-Yaghuth, Ubayy ibn Khalaf, and al-As ibn Wail said: O Muhammad, if an angel had been sent with **you** to speak to men about **you** and to be seen with **you**! Then God sent down concerning these words of theirs: (6:8-6:9)

QURANIC CHAPTER 6: THE FLOCKS (AL-ANAM)
SIGNS 6:1-6:10

Makkah: *The Praise belongs to God*
Who created the heavens and the earth
and made the shadows and the light.
Again, those who were ungrateful to their Lord,
they equate others to Him. (6:1)
It was He Who created you from clay,
and, again, decided a term,
a term, that which was determined by Him.
Again, you contest. (6:2)
And He is God in the heavens and in and on the earth.
He knows your secret and what you openly publish
and He knows whatever you earn. (6:3)
And a sign not approaches for them
from the signs of their Lord
but they would be ones who turn aside from it. (6:4)
Then, surely, they denied The Truth
when it drew near to them.

Then, tidings approach them of what
they had been ridiculing of it. (6:5)
Consider they not
how many a generation before them We caused to perish?
We established them firmly in and on the earth
such as We firmly establish not for you.
And We sent abundant rain from heaven.
And We made rivers run beneath them.
So We caused them to perish for their impieties
and We caused to grow after them other generations. (6:6)
*And if We sent down to **you** a Book on parchment,*
then, they would have stretched towards it with their hands.
Those who were ungrateful would have said:
This is nothing but clear sorcery. (6:7)
And they said: Why was an angel
not caused to descend to him?
And, certainly, if We caused to descend an angel,
the command would be decided.
Again, no respite would be given to them. (6:8)
And if We made him an angel, certainly,
We would have made him as a man
and We would have confused them
when they are already confused. (6:9)
*And, certainly, Messengers were ridiculed before **you**.*
So those who derided them were surrounded
by what they had been ridiculing. (6:10)

COMMENTARY°

A FRAMEWORK IS SET

The three opening signs strike the basic notes as they lay the foundation for the subject matter of the section, namely, faith. (6:1-6:3)

The section begins with praising God and glorifying Him as only He, the Creator and Originator of all things, deserves to be praised and glorified.

It then wonders at those people who behold this awesome existence, itself a great testimony to the infinite ability of the Supreme Creator and His faultless planning, but who still refuse to believe in God, acknowledge His Oneness or praise Him. Instead, they associate partners with Him whom they allege to be His equals: *Again, those who were ungrateful to their Lord, they equate others to Him.* (6:1)

The picture continues to unfold with its reference to human existence which follows the existence of the universe and the two phe-

nomena of darkness and light. This is a remarkable Quranic touch taking us from the darkness of clay to the light of active life. We perceive here the full artistic harmony at work, with the reference to darkness and light made at the outset.

Another closely intertwined subtlety prepares us for a first term appointed for death and a second term appointed for resurrection known only to God. We, thus, have two contrasting notions to contemplate, namely idleness and movement and a dull clay contrasted with life created by God. The gap between these opposites both in time and nature, is wide indeed. All this should inspire every human heart with the certainty that it is all part of God's scheme and that we will all be gathered to Him. Yet those who are addressed by this section continue to have doubts: *Again, you contest.* (6:2)

A third touch in these short signs combines the two previous ones within the same framework, making it clear that God is the only deity in the whole universe, including the human world: *And He is God in the heavens and in and on the earth. He knows your secret and what you openly publish and He knows whatever you earn.* (6:3)

The ungrateful Arabs addressed initially by this section did not deny God's existence altogether. Indeed, they acknowledged His existence and that He was the Creator who provided sustenance to His creation, and who owned the universe and caused life and death. They acknowledged many of His attributes as the Quran states. The reason then for classifying them as ungrateful was their unwillingness to come to the logical conclusion of God's actual existence, in other words, that God must be given authority over their whole lives, without their associating any partners with Him in that.

This passage of the section portrays this unreasonable stubbornness, issuing on the one hand a stern warning and on the other a reminder of the fate of earlier rejecters. The admonition is stacked with various but highly effective touches that follow the initial jolt that shakes people's hearts at the outset of the section.

SOCIAL ATTITUDES AND THE DECLINE OF NATIONS

Signs (6:4-6:6) are clear that turning away from the truth is an obstinate position taken by the ungrateful and this in the face of all the evidence pointing to its error. They do not lack signs and pointers which guide people to faith, nor do they lack evidence to prove the truth of the message and the genuine honesty of the Messenger conveying it, nor do they lack evidence of God. These are the basic concepts they are called upon to accept.

All they lack is the will to respond to clear evidence, overcome irrational stubbornness and reflect on the truth presented to them:

And a sign not approaches for them from the signs of their Lord but they would be ones who turn aside from it. (6:4) Such deliberate obstinacy against all evidence and clear signs needs the threat of severe punishment to jolt them out of their attitude, remove the barriers of their conceit and reawaken their natural responses: *Then, surely, they denied The Truth when it drew near to them. Then, tidings approach them of what they had been ridiculing of it.* (6:5)

Their attentions and minds are drawn to the calamities that befell past nations which, like them, rejected the truth. They even had some knowledge of those nations and what happened to them in the remains of the people of Aad of al-Ahqaf and Thamud of al-Hijr. The Arabs of Makkah used to pass by these remains when they went on their winter and summer journeys to Yemen and Syria respectively. They also passed by the destroyed towns of the Prophet Lot's people, Sodom and Gomorrah, and were aware of the tales that were in circulation concerning what happened to those people. They should, therefore, reflect on these peoples' fate: *So We caused them to perish for their impieties and We caused to grow after them other generations.* (6:6)

People are often deceived when they see a despotic ruler, a corrupt or atheist person enjoying power on earth, able to escape punishment. But people are hasty. They see only the beginning or the middle of the route but not its end to which such person arrives at the appropriate time. We can see examples of it in how ancient generations who defied God and His messengers were destroyed. In the Quran, our attention is drawn to their fates so that we realize that the end is not what we see at a particular point in time. The statement: *So We caused them to perish for their impieties* is often repeated in the Quran in a variety of ways. Such repetition aims to establish a certain fact and to clarify a part of the Quranic interpretation of historical events. It shows that sins do destroy sinners and that it is God who brings about their destruction. This is a law which remains in operation although an individual or a generation may not see it within their own limited life span. It simply engulfs nations when they allow sins to become an essential part of their lifestyle.

STUBBORN REJECTION OF EVIDENT FACTS

The section goes on to describe the nature of obstinate rejection, delineating for us a very strange type of people whom we meet in every age and every community. These are people who deny what is so clear and undeniable. The Quran depicts this type of people in its own inimitable style, using only a few words to bring it to life in front of our eyes: *And if We sent down to you a Book on parchment,*

then, they would have stretched towards it with their hands. (6:7)

What causes them to turn away from God's revelations is not the lack of strong and clear evidence of their truthfulness. They are only being unreasonably stubborn. Their denial is firmly held as though it was a matter of principle. Such an attitude allows no consideration of any evidence or proof. Had God chosen to send down the Quran to His Messenger by means other than revelation, which they cannot see, and put it on paper which they can feel and see, and had they touched this paper with their own hands, they would still reject the evidence of their own hands and eyes. They would emphatically claim: *Those who were ungrateful would have said: This is nothing but clear sorcery.* (6:7)

The section then gives us an example of the suggestions made by the ungrateful, and this reveals both their hardened stubbornness and their ignorance. They suggest that an angel could have accompanied the Prophet in conveying his message to give proof that he was truly God's Messenger. The reply shows how ignorant they were of the angels' nature and why God sent them to do the tasks He assigned to them. It is only because of His mercy that God does not act on their suggestion: (6:8-6:9)

This was not a new suggestion made by the Quraysh ungrateful. Many communities before them had muted the same as we are told in the Quran. The suggestion and the Quranic reply to it at this point raise a number of issues, as we will presently see.

Firstly, the pagan Arabs did not deny God altogether, but they wanted proof that the Prophet Muhammad was truly His Messenger and that the book he recited to them was truly revealed to him by God. They wanted a particular proof, namely, that an angel be sent to him to confirm his claim. This was just one of the numerous suggestions reported in the Quran.

Moreover, they had in the Quran itself a proof which was more telling than the material proofs they demanded. In itself, and in its inimitable style, the Quran tells that it has been revealed by God whose existence they did not deny. Most assuredly, they realized this and knew it for certain. They possessed a fine literary and artistic sense which must have made it clear to them that, in its excellence, the Quran greatly surpassed the farthest limits of human ability. A person who has the gift of artistic expression is better able to recognize and appreciate this than one who has not. Anyone with this gift will tell us clearly that the Quran surpasses all that human literary excellence can produce. No one denies this except a person who deliberately tries to suppress what he knows.

Moreover, the contents of the Quran, i.e. the concepts of faith

and the method it utilises to drive these concepts home to people, as also its touches and influences, were all totally new to human minds. They were unknown in human artistic expression. The Arabs were not unaware of all these facts. They recognized them within themselves. Their statements and attitudes showed that they did not doubt that the Quran was revealed by God.

All this makes it clear that, in point of fact, their suggestions were not made to seek a proof. They were simply born out of an unyielding stubbornness. Their position was truly as God describes in the preceding sign: (6:7)

A World of Creation Beyond Human Senses

The second issue was that the Arabs knew about the angels and requested that God should send down an angel to support His Messenger and confirm the truth of his message. They knew nothing, however, of the nature of this type of creation, i.e. the angels, which is known only to God. Therefore, they formulated their own arbitrary conceptions of these creatures and the sort of relationship which existed between them and their Lord on the one hand, and with the earth and its inhabitants on the other. The Quran refers to the Arabian misconceptions about the angels and the legends of pagan nations. It points out their errors so that anyone who is guided to accept the Quranic message will revise their concepts about the universe and its creatures.

One of the Arabs' ill-conceived concepts, identified in the Quran as having been formulated in their pre-Quranic days, was their belief that the angels were God's daughters. As such, they believed angels were able to intercede with God and their intercession was never refused. It is thought that some of the more important idols were symbols of angels.

The Quran also provides the true facts, correcting the erroneous concept of the ungrateful about the angels' nature. This is provided in these two signs in this section as it is given elsewhere in the Quran: *And, certainly, if We caused to descend an angel, the command would be decided. Again, no respite would be given to them.* (6:8) This is part of the information provided in the Quran on the nature of the angels created by God.

The other part of the definition of the angels as God's own servants is provided by the second sign: *And if We made him an angel, certainly, We would have made him as a man and We would have confused them when they are already confused.* (6:9)

Therefore, if God wanted to send an angel to confirm His Prophet's message, that angel would have appeared to humanity in

the form of a person, not in his own angelic form. This would have made the confusion persist, especially when Muhammad would sometimes say to them: I am Muhammad whom you have known very well. God has sent me as a messenger to warn you and give you happy news. How much greater would their confusion be if an angel came to them in the form of a person whom they did not know and said: I am an angel sent by God to confirm the message preached by His Messenger? To them, that angel would only appear as a person like them. They were confusing simple facts. If God were to send an angel, He would have given it human form and would have confused the very thing the ungrateful were themselves confusing. They would not have been able to see right guidance.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message states that previous Messengers were also ridiculed. What happened to those who ridiculed the Messengers? All Messengers were ridiculed. Those who ridicule the Messengers will be surrounded themselves by what they ridicule. Ridiculing or deriding others is not a good deed. Messengers in the past were ridiculed. Those who ridicule will be surrounded by what they had ridiculed.

ONE POSSIBLE EXAMPLE

Purpose: Previous Messengers were also ridiculed. **Question:** What happened to those who ridiculed the Messengers? **Fact:** All Messengers were ridiculed. **Interpretation:** Those who ridicule the Messengers will be sur-

rounded themselves by what they ridicule. **Concept:** Ridiculing or deriding others is not a good deed. **Assumption:** That Messengers in the past were ridiculed. **Implication:** Those who ridicule will be surrounded by what they had ridiculed.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I don't waste time. Most of us waste some time; that is, fail to use all of our time productively or even pleasurably.
Sometimes I jump from one diversion to another, without enjoying any of them.
Sometimes I become irritated about matters beyond my control.
Sometimes I fail to plan well causing me negative consequences I could easily have avoided (for example, I spend time unnecessarily trapped in traffic—though I could have left a half hour earlier and avoided the rush).
Sometimes I worry unproductively.
Sometimes I spend time regretting what is past.
Sometimes I just stare off blankly into space.

LESSON 55(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY GENERATING PURPOSE, AIM, GOAL, OBJECTIVE

One of the goals of the Quran is for encourage the oneness of humanity. Others are: to break the bonds of ignorance, missed guidance, social and moral corruption. These are all considered to be shadows or darknesses. When these bonds are broken, the Quran guides humanity to goodness, light and being fair and just.

You begin developing your reasoning or discernment faculty by understanding what this particular element of thought or reasoning is. That is, you learn to generate the purpose, aim, goal or objective of the Quranic signs and their message.

HISTORY

Let us now consider a number of Hadith which give us an insight into how the Prophet portrayed God's purpose so as to make it properly appreciated by ordinary people.

Abu Hurayrah quotes the Prophet as saying: When God created His creation, He wrote in a book which He keeps with Him above the Throne: My grace overspeeds My anger.[1]

In another version related by al- Bukhari, the last sentence is quoted as: My grace oversteps My anger.[2]

Both al-Bukhari and Muslim relate on the authority of Abu Hurayrah that God's Messenger said that: God has made mercy into one hundred parts. He then retained ninety-nine parts and placed on earth one part. It is from that one part that creatures show mercy to one another, to the extent that a female animal lifts its hoof away from its young in order not to harm it.

Muslim also relates on the authority of Salman that God's Messenger said: God has one hundred acts of mercy. One of these is the one by which creatures show mercy to one another. The other ninety-nine parts are reserved to the Day of Judgment.[3]

In yet another hadith related by Muslim,[4] we read: When God created the heavens and the earth, He also created one hundred mercies, each one of them filled the space between the heavens and the earth. He placed one mercy on earth. It is through this that a mother is compassionate to her baby, and so are wild beasts and birds. On the Day of Judgment, God complements them with this one mercy.[5]

This is an inspiring description by the Prophet, one which makes it easy for the human mind to visualize the extent of God's grace. We only need to reflect on how mothers are so kind-hearted to their youngsters and the sympathy and kindness people show towards the very young and very old, the sick and the invalid, and to relatives

and friends. We should also contemplate how birds and animals sometimes manifest their mercy to one another in amazing ways. Now let us consider that all this mercy is the result of a single part out of one hundred parts of God's mercy. We can, thus, appreciate the extent of God's abounding, and inexhaustible grace.

Having taught his Companions this important fact and its great significance in such an inspiring way, God's Messenger moved them on another step so that they became merciful in their dealings with others and so that they were compassionate to one another and to all living things. The Prophet wanted them to enjoy the happiness of being merciful, just as they were happy to appreciate the extent of God's grace.

Abd Allah ibn Amr quotes the Prophet as saying: The merciful are granted mercy by God. Show mercy to those on earth so that you are shown mercy by the One in heaven.[6] Jarir quotes God's Messenger as saying: God does not bestow His grace on those who do not show mercy to people.[7] Abu Hurayrah quotes the Prophet as saying: No one but a miserable creature is deprived of mercy.[8]

In teaching his Companions, the Prophet did not stop at extending mercy to humanity. He was fully aware that God's grace encompasses everything, and that the believers are required to cultivate within themselves the moral principles which form the attributes of God. We do not attain our full humanity unless we are merciful to every living thing. The Prophet's instructions in this regard were, as always, highly inspiring.

Abu Hurayrah quotes the Prophet as saying: A man was traveling along a road when he was very thirsty. He found a well, so he went down into it to drink. As he came up he found a gasping dog who was apparently so thirsty that he licked the dust. The man thought: This dog is now as thirsty as I was a short while ago. Therefore, he went down the well again and filled his shoe with water. Holding it in his mouth, he came up and gave the water to the dog to drink. God rewarded him for his action by forgiving him. The Prophet's audience asked: Messenger of God, are we to be rewarded for kindness to animals? He answered: You get a reward for every kindness you do to any living creature.[9]

Such was the Prophet's method in cultivating among his Companions a keen sense of appreciation of Quranic guidance. This enabled them to appreciate how limitless God's grace is, through their own mercy to one another. It was clear to them that all aspects of mercy in their world come only from one out of a hundred parts of God's mercy.

QURANIC CHAPTER 6: THE FLOCKS (AL-ANAM)
SIGNS 6:11-6:20

Makkah: *Say: Journey through the earth;*
again, look on how had been
the Ultimate End of the ones who deny. (6:11)
Say: To whom is whatever is in the heavens and the earth?
Say: To God. He prescribed mercy for Himself.
He will, certainly, gather you on the Day of Resurrection.
There is no doubt in it. Those who lost themselves that Day,
then, they will not believe. (6:12)
And to Him belongs whatever inhabited
the nighttime and the daytime.
And He is The Hearing, The Knowing. (6:13)
Say: Will I take to myself, other than God, a protector,
One Who is Originator of the heavens and the earth?
And it is He who feeds and He who is never fed.
Say: Truly, I was commanded:
that I be the first who submitted to the One God.
*And **you** have not been*
among the ones who are idolaters. (6:14)
Say: Truly, I fear if I rebelled against my Lord,
the punishment of the tremendous Day! (6:15)
He who is turned away from it on that Day,
then, surely, He had mercy on him.
And that is the winning the clear triumph. (6:16)
*And if God touches **you** with harm,*
then, no one will remove it but He.
*And if He touches **you** with good, then,*
He is Powerful over everything. (6:17)
He is The One Who is Omniscient over His servants.
And He is The Wise, The Aware. (6:18)
Say: Which thing is greater in testimony?
Say: God is Witness between me and you.
And this, the Quran, was revealed to me
that I should warn you with it and whomever it reached.
Truly, are you bearing witness
that there are other gods with God?
Say: I bear not such witness.
Say: He is not but One God
and I am, truly, free from partners you ascribe with Him. (6:19)
Madinah (6:20)

COMMENTARY°

Immediately after that another wave begins, defining the truth of God as it is clearly reflected in God's ownership of everything in the heavens and earth, and what takes its rest at night or day. It is also seen in the fact that God is the only one who provides for all creation, the one who feeds them and is fed by none. Hence, He is the only guardian and the only protector, to whom all creatures must submit themselves. It is He who punishes the disobedient ones in the life to come, who can bring benefit and cause harm, and who has power over all things: (6:12-6:19)

The early passages in this chapter sound like waves following one another in quick succession. Rising high and with a deep, mysterious rhythm, this third wave comes after a discussion about denying the truth of the Quranic message, turning away from it, meeting its advocates with derision and ridicule. The discussion in the earlier passage included very strong threats and a reminder of the fate of earlier nations that took a similar attitude to God's messages. The first passage, representing the first wave, discussed the truth of God as reflected in the creation of the wide universe and highly complex human beings. This new wave also discusses the same truth of God but it includes different aspects, employing different rhythms and a new inspiration. Thus, the discussion on denying the truth comes in between the opening and the present passages, and this adds to its unpleasant reality.

When the presentation is completed, the conclusion is given with increased rhythm, calling out witnesses to God's Oneness and denouncing the very thought of associating partners with Him, all this within a clear demarcation of positions. Here again the strong rhythm is enhanced by the repeated order, 'Say... Say... Say...'. Thus, the passage delivers a sense of awe and seriousness.

A COMMITMENT MADE BY GOD

Here (6:12-6:13), the section adopts an attitude of confrontation that aims to state the issues very clearly before drawing the lines that separate the believers from all others. It gives the Prophet certain instructions to take up this confrontation with those who are fully aware that God is the Creator of the whole universe, but who, nevertheless, worship other beings even though these have no power to create anything equal to Him. That is, they associate partners with Him whom they claim have a say in how they conduct their lives. The Prophet is instructed to confront them with a question about the ownership, which follows creation, of everything in the heavens and

on earth. As the question is put, it is meant to include every single element in the whole universe. It is followed by a statement of fact over which they did not and could not argue. The Quran tells us elsewhere that they used to acknowledge it fully: (6:12)

The Quranic sign follows this statement asserting God's ownership of the heavens and earth by stating that: *He prescribed mercy for Himself.* (6:12) He is the sole, undisputed owner of the whole universe. He, however, out of His generosity and by His own will, has committed Himself to bestow grace and mercy. No one could suggest this exercise of bestowing grace to Him or require it of Him, apart from His absolutely freewill and His compassionate lordship over the universe.

If we were to try to make an exhaustive list of the incidents and occasions wherein God bestows His mercy and how it is reflected in life, we would need to devote our whole lives to it. Indeed, generations can come and go before this task could be accomplished. In every moment God's grace is showered over people. We have only identified that mercy which is reflected in hard tests, because often people do not see it as such. We have no intention to attempt a full list of the occasions and the incidents where God's mercy is brought into action. We will instead only make some brief references to it. However, we need to reflect a little on the way this Quranic statement is phrased: *He prescribed mercy for Himself.* (6:12) The same statement is repeated again in Verse 54 of this chapter with a slight variation: *Your Lord prescribed mercy for Himself.* (6:54)

When All Gather for Judgment

Before God favored the Arabs with this religion and elevated them to its noble level, they used to deny the Day of Resurrection in the same way as the proponents of the present-day tribal honor deny it. Hence, this fact of gathering God's creatures has been expressed in the most emphatic style: *He will, certainly, gather you on the Day of Resurrection. There is no doubt in it. Those who lost themselves that Day, then, they will not believe.*(6:12)

The only losers on that day are those who have not believed during this life. These shall not gain anything to compensate for their loss, because they have lost everything. Indeed, they have lost themselves and are no longer capable of anything. After all, we try to make a gain for ourselves. When we have lost our own soul, what can we gain? And for whom? *Those who lost themselves that Day, then, they will not believe.* (6:12)

The section then refers to all creatures in terms of time, as it has referred to them in terms of place in the preceding sign. It states that

God, limitless is He in His glory, owns them all, has full knowledge of them and hears everything they say and do: *And to Him belongs whatever inhabited the nighttime and the daytime.* (6:13)

The Arabic term used in the Quranic sign and rendered here by the phrase: Takes its rest also means in inhabit. The reference in the sign is then made to every creature that rests at night or in the day. As such, it includes all creatures. The Quranic sign states the fact that they all belong to God alone. This is the second statement of this fact although it came in the first sign in terms of place: *Say: To whom is whatever is in the heavens and the earth? Say: To God.* (6:12) The reference here, in the second sign, is made in terms of time: *And to Him belongs whatever inhabited the nighttime and the daytime. And He is The Hearing, The Knowing.* (6:13) This tendency to include all, and to use every aspect, is perfectly familiar in the Quran.

The final comment is that which concerns God's attributes of The Hearing and The Knowing. It implies having complete and perfect knowledge of all these creatures and all that is said about them by the ungrateful. The ungrateful Arabs used to acknowledge that the Creator and the Owner is one.

GOD'S ONENESS: THE FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION

So far, the basic fact that God is the only Creator and the only owner of everything that exists in the universe has been established. This is now followed by a strong denunciation of seeking support from, or addressing worship to, anyone other than God. All such deeds contradict the fundamental fact of submission to God since they are acts of idolatry that do not fit with the Quranic message. A number of God's attributes are also stated here, including that He is the Creator of the heavens and earth, the sustainer of all, the Almighty. The general air of awe is enhanced by a mention of God's severe punishment: (6:14-6:18)

This is, indeed, the basic issue: taking God alone for our Master, or *wali*, in every sense of the word. He alone is the Lord to be worshipped. We submit to Him as He is the only Sovereign. No support may be sought from anyone other than Him. In every grave situation, we appeal to Him alone for help.

This fundamental issue is stated in these signs in the strongest terms and is contained within a powerful rhythm: *Say: Will I take to myself, other than God, a protector, One Who is Originator of the heavens and the earth? And it is He who feeds and He who is never fed.* (6:14)

This Quranic sign reflects human nature's powerful logic. To whom does mastery belong and who alone is to be viewed as patron,

if not the Creator who has originated the heavens and the earth? To whom, if not to the One who provides sustenance and nourishment to every creature in the heavens and on earth while He Himself needs none? *Say: Will I take to myself, other than God, a protector, One Who is Originator of the heavens and the earth?* when such are His attributes? What logic allows that anyone other than God be taken as master?

This is followed by another instruction to the Prophet: *Say: Truly, I was commanded: that I be the first who submitted to the One God And you have not been among the ones who are idolaters.* (6:14) To submit oneself to God and not to associate partners with Him means that we must not accept anyone other than God as a master. To do so is to be guilty of idolatry and idolatry cannot be equated with the Quran.

The Prophet was commanded to make this powerful and decisive denunciation of their beliefs and to state the principles of the Quranic message in the clearest of terms. He was also ordered to warn and frighten the ungrateful, declaring at the same time how seriously he viewed the whole issue and how he dreaded God's punishment, should he be guilty of disobedience to Him: *Say: Truly, I fear if I rebelled against my Lord, the punishment of the tremendous Day! He who is turned away from it on that Day, then, surely, He had mercy on him. And that is the winning the clear triumph.* (6:15-6:16)

But why should the human being take a master for himself other than God? Why does he allow himself to sink into ingratitude when he has been forbidden to do so? Why does he not do what he is commanded to do, namely to submit himself to God? Why does he expose himself to the grievous torment which follows upon such disobedience? Does he think that people will come to his help if he experiences misfortune? Or does he hope to receive kindness from them? All this can only be granted to him by God, who has supreme power and who can cause everything to happen and who holds sway over all His creatures. It is He alone who grants and denies people's wishes according to His wisdom and His knowledge of their conditions: *And if God touches you with harm, then, no one will remove it but He. And if He touches you with good, then, He is Powerful over everything. He is The One Who is Omniscient over His servants. And He is The Wise, The Aware.*(6:17-6:18)

Here we see how the Quran penetrates the depth of the human soul to touch on its latent desires and innermost fears. It brings all this into the open and subjects it to the light of faith which distinguishes good from evil. It presents the issues clearly and defines the

nature of God succinctly. This fits well with the importance of the central question with which the section deals at this point and which the Quran tackles on many occasions.

A TESTIMONY TO SETTLE ALL ISSUES

Now comes the climax of this passage, which employs a profound rhythm so as to re-emphasize the right attitude of a believer. The final sign of the passage serves as a clear statement of position, a warning and a move away from everything that has an element of setting partners with God. The style here is both strong and decisive: *Say: Which thing is greater in testimony? Say: God is Witness between me and you. And this, the Quran, was revealed to me that I should warn you with it and whomever it reached. Truly, are you bearing witness that there are other gods with God? Say: I bear not such witness. Say: He is not but One God and I am, truly, free from partners you ascribe with Him.*(6:19)

These signs are made up of a series of short statements which follow each other in very quick succession. This, to give us quick images of the different attitudes which can be held in relation to the central issue. Nevertheless, the painting is so vivid that we can see all expressions on the faces of the characters drawn and we can even penetrate their thoughts. What we see first is a command given by God to His Messenger. This is immediately followed by a scene wherein God's Messenger confronts the ungrateful who are associating partners with God and who want him, i.e. the Prophet, to endorse their falsehood before they accept his message. They imagine that such an exchange is feasible and that the Quran and idolatry can exist side by side in someone's heart. It is sad to say that some people still think that this is possible. They argue that a person can submit himself to God while he conducts his life on the basis of teachings he receives from other sources and while he acknowledges the authority of other powers and seeks the help and patronage of other beings.

Thus, God's Messenger confronts the ungrateful. He makes it clear to them that he and they follow two separate roads that cannot meet. He outlines the difference between what he advocates of believing in God's Oneness and submitting to Him and their beliefs and practices which associate partners with God. He tells them that the starting points of both camps are so wide apart that no compromise between them can be worked out unless they abandon their beliefs and accept His faith.

This confrontation is depicted in a public scene calling for an open testimony: *Say: Which thing is greater in testimony?* (6:19)

Who is the best witness in the whole universe? Who is the One whose testimony refutes every other argument? Who has the final word? In order to make the generalization total so that nothing in the whole universe is discounted as a possible witness, the question is asked in this manner: *Say: Which thing is greater in testimony?* (6:19)

The Prophet is ordered to put the question, and he is also ordered to provide the answer. The addressees themselves acknowledge that there is no other answer to give: *Say: God is Witness between me and you. And this, the Quran, was revealed to me that I should warn you with it and whomever it reached.* (6:19)

Having declared this indisputable fact, that God's testimony is strongest and weightiest, the Prophet declares that God Almighty is the witness between them and Him in this central issue: *Say: God is Witness between me and you.* (6:19) The Arabic text admits a break in this statement, making it more in line with the general scene and giving it a more powerful and dramatic effect. In the first instance, the sentence is given in the same way as it is rendered in the translation: *Say: God is Witness between me and you.* (6:19) If we break it up, it reads as follows: *Say: Which thing is greater in testimony? Say: God is Witness between me and you.* (6:19)

When the principle of referring to God for arbitration in this central issue has been established, the Prophet declares to the ungrateful that God's testimony is included in the Quran which He has revealed to him to warn them as well as everyone who comes to know of the Quran during the Prophet's lifetime or subsequently. Thus, the Quran is taken in evidence against them and against all those whom it reaches, because it contains God's testimony in this central issue which provides the basis of human existence and universal existence as a whole. *And this, the Quran, was revealed to me that I should warn you with it and whomever it reached.* (6:19)

Having made it clear to them that God's testimony is included in the Quran, the Prophet goes on to sum up this testimony in a challenging way which discards the ungrateful' own testimony, since it is fundamentally at variance with God's own. The Prophet also declares to them that he totally rejects their assertions and believes them to be false. He further declares that he firmly believes in the Oneness of God, the Supreme Lord of the universe. As such, he parts company with them at the outset and dissociates himself most emphatically from their polytheism: *Truly, are you bearing witness that there are other gods with God? Say: I bear not such witness. Say: He is not but One God and I am, truly, free from partners you ascribe with Him.* (6:19)

With such powerful rhythm and short, emphatic sentences, the

Quranic text touches people's hearts in a way no other style can do.

A PERFECTLY CLEAR ATTITUDE

The situation of humanity today is in many ways identical to what it was at the time when the Quran was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. At that time, the Quran, as a faith and a code of living was established on a central principle which required people to declare their acceptance that there is no god other than God. *Say: Truly, I was commanded: that I be the first who submitted to the One God And you have not been among the ones who are polytheists.* (6:14)

Such reflection would bring home to them that to take anyone other than God for a patron or master, submitting to him and seeking his help, is contrary to the Quran. It is, indeed, the sort of idolatry from which the Quran endeavours to free humanity. They will also come to know that the first manifestation of such a relationship is to accept laws enacted by any being other than God, whether they relate to faith or practical life. Needless to say, all humanity are in this position today. Therefore, the advocates of the Quranic message must define their objective to free all humanity from subservience to other creatures so that they submit to God alone.

Moreover, the advocates of the Quranic message need to contemplate the basic facts outlined in the following signs: (6:15-6:18)

Anyone who faces ignorance, its tyranny, might, deviousness, arrogance, corruption and wickedness needs to keep these facts in mind and preserve these feelings in his heart as a precaution against falling into sin as also to ward off the terrible punishment which awaits sinners. This will enhance his conviction that the only one who can benefit or harm him is God, who holds sway over all His servants and whose judgment cannot be overturned. The task of establishing the Quranic message in the face of the overwhelming opposition posed by tribal honor is hard indeed, requiring a long and enduring struggle. It cannot be undertaken by anyone who does not keep the above facts in mind and who does not nurture the aforementioned feelings. They should say what God's Messenger was commanded to say in this position, and to confront tribal honor with it in the same way as the Prophet did in fulfilment of what he was bidden by God: *Say: He is not but One God.* (6:19)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary**

(concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quran tells the Prophet to say to the people that he was commanded to be the first who submitted (*muslim*) to the One God. He was not among the polytheists, the ungrateful who worshipped more gods than there are. There is only One God and a Muslim is one who submits to the One God. To submit means that one does not rebel against God's will. To submit to the One God is to be saved. That Muhammad was commanded to be the first one [among you] who submitted (*muslim*) to the One God.

How would your rate yourself? Answer the following questions:

Am I clear about what precisely I am evaluating?;
Am I clear about my purpose? Is my purpose legitimate?
Given my purpose, what are the relevant criteria or standards for evaluation?
Do I have sufficient information about that which I am evaluating?
Is that information relevant to the purpose?
Have I applied my criteria accurately and fairly to the facts as I know them?
Uncritical thinkers often treat evaluation as mere preference or treat their evaluative judgments as direct observations not admitting of error.

LESSON 55(3). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
CLARIFYING ISSUES OR CONCLUSIONS

When there is a clear question stated about an issue in a Quranic sign, it is important for Quranic critical thinkers to first recognize what is needed to answer, settle or solve it and then evaluate solutions or conclusions. In other words, before you can agree with or disagree with a statement, you must clearly understand it. Quranic critical thinkers first understand the sign(s) and then make a discerning judgment. They then are able to ask the appropriate questions that would lead to understanding and evaluating the situation.

HISTORY

In order to give more credence to their false description of the Quran and to turn people away from it, a man like Malik ibn al-Nadr, who had learnt some Persian epics about Rustam and other Persian legendary heroes, used to sit at a short distance from the Prophet when he recited the Quran. After the Prophet Muhammad had finished, Malik ibn al-Nadr used to say to his audience: "If Muhammad could tell you some fables of the ancients, I can tell you better ones." He would then relate to them some of the epics and histories he had learnt, hoping that in this way, he could prevent them from listening to the Quran. Indeed, the chiefs of Makkah who commanded a position of authority and respect used to forbid others to listen to the Quran, and they tried to stay away from its reading so that they did not submit to its powerful logic and irrefutable argument. In other words, they feared to be influenced by it: *And they prohibit others from it. And they withdraw aside from it.* (6:26)

In this battle between the powerful authority of truth and the feeble structure of falsehood, it was not enough that a man like Malik ibn al-Nadr sat down to relate the epics and histories of the ancients. Instead, the Quraysh chiefs forbade their followers from listening to the Quran and they also distracted themselves lest they too be unable to resist its influence.

QURANIC CHAPTER 6: THE FLOCKS (AL-ANAM)
SIGNS 6:21-6:30

Makkah: *And who does greater wrong*
than he who devised a lie against God or denied His signs.
Truly, the ones who are unjust will not prosper. (6:21)
And on a Day We will assemble them altogether.
Again, We will say to those who ascribed partners with God:
Where are your ascribed associates with God

whom you had been claiming? (6:22)

Madinah (6:23)

Makkah: *Look on how they have lied against themselves.*
Went astray with them that which they had been devising. (6:24)
And among them are those who listen to ***you****.*
But We laid sheathes on their hearts so that they not understand it
and in their ears is a heaviness.
And if they are to see every sign they will not believe in it.
So that when they drew near ***you****, they dispute with* ***you****.*
Those who were ungrateful say:
This is nothing but fables of the ancient ones. (6:25)
And they prohibit others from it.
And they withdraw aside from it.
And they cause to perish, no doubt, none but themselves,
but they are not aware. (6:26)
And if ***you*** *would see when they would be stationed*
by the fire,
they will say: Would that we be returned to life.
Then, we would not deny the signs of our Lord
and we would be among the ones who believe. (6:27)
Nay! Shown to themselves will be
what they had been concealing before.
And even if they were returned,
they would revert to what they were prohibited from there
and, truly, they are the ones who lie. (6:28)
They said: There is nothing but this, our present life
and we are not ones who will be raised up. (6:29)
And if ***you*** *would see when they would be stationed*
before their Lord.
He would say: Is this not The Truth?
They would say: Yea, by Our Lord.
He would say: Then, experience the punishment
for what you had been ungrateful. (6:30)

COMMENTARY°

This new wave or round takes us back to the confrontation with the ungrateful who deny the truth of the Quran and refuse to believe in resurrection and life after death: *And who does greater wrong than he who devised a lie against God or denied His signs. Truly, the ones who are unjust will not prosper.* (6:21) This time, however, it does not describe their stubborn rejection; nor does it remind them of the destruction of earlier generations who took the same attitude before

them. Instead, it holds before their eyes their destiny on the Day of Resurrection which they deny, and the recompense they will be made to suffer in their next life which they refuse to accept, both described in the most vivid of scenes. It confronts them with all this when they are gathered together, putting to them questions full of reproach, and loaded with amazement at their attitude: *And on a Day We will assemble them altogether. Again, We will say to those who ascribed partners with God: Where are your ascribed associates with God whom you had been claiming?* (6:22) They are overwhelmed by fear, realizing their weakness, helpless and bewildered. They swear by God, acknowledging that He is the only Lord: *Again, their dissent will not be but that they would say: By God! Our Lord! We had not been ones who are polytheists.* (6:23)

Once again they are confronted with their past attitude as they stand before the fire. Worried, afraid, repentant and full of sorrow, they say: *And if you would see when they would be stationed by the fire, they will say: Would that we be returned to life. Then, we would not deny the signs of our Lord and we would be among the ones who believe.* (6:27) The same confrontation is repeated again as they stand before their Lord, overwhelmed by shame, sorrow and fear. He, in His majesty, will ask them: *Is this not The Truth?* (6:30) They will humbly answer: *They would say: Yea, by Our Lord.* (6:30) But this admission will have come too late to be of any benefit to them, for God will say to them: *He would say: Then, experience the punishment for what you had been ungrateful.* (6:30)

A Contention Contrary to Reality

God denounces those who deny and describes denial as the worst injustice: *And who does greater wrong than he who devised a lie against God or denied His signs.* (6:21) Reference is made here to idolatry as injustice in order to enhance its most horrible image. Indeed, it is the most frequent description of idolatry in the Quran. Moreover, it is accurate since idolatry is an act of injustice perpetrated against the truth, against oneself and against humanity in general. It is an offense against God's own right to be worshipped alone, without partners, and against oneself as it leads the perpetrator to ruin. It is also an offense against humanity who are thus led away from the path of submission to God alone in order to establish regimes and conditions that ruin human life altogether. As such, idolatry is a great injustice, as it is described by the Lord of all the worlds. Neither idolatry nor the idolaters will, however, achieve any success: *Truly, the ones who are unjust will not prosper.* (6:21) Here God states the full facts and the end result of idolatry and the idolaters, or

injustice and the wrongdoers. What short-sighted people may see of the affluence that some enjoy in the short run cannot be described as success or prosperity because it is no more than a short-lived situation which leads to eventual ruin. Who can be more truthful than God?

As an example of their loss, their situation on the Day of Resurrection is described very vividly: (6:22; 6:24)

There are numerous forms and types of idolatry and idolaters and the partners they associate with God. A naive image of people worshipping statues, stones, trees, etc. is by no means the only form of idolatry. In essence, associating partners with God is to acknowledge any one of the qualities attributable to God alone as belonging to others as well, whether such quality relates to His conduct or control of events, destinies, or to the offering of worship rituals. All these are forms of idolatry practised by different groups of ungrateful who associate different forms of partners with God.

In this scene of gathering and confrontation, all types of idolaters are questioned about the partners they associate with God. These other deities are nowhere to be seen, nor can they avail their worshippers of anything: *And on a Day We will assemble them altogether. Again, We will say to those who ascribed partners with God: Where are your ascribed associates with God whom you had been claiming?* (6:22) We almost behold the scene with our own eyes: the gathering of all creatures and the question to which no answer is given.

The Prophet is invited to wonder at their situation as God states that they have lied to themselves when they associated partners with God, for He has no partners. On the Day of Judgment, their falsehood fails them and they have no option but to acknowledge the truth: *Look on how they have lied against themselves. Went astray with them that which they had been devising.* (6:24)

The section goes on to describe how some of the ungrateful stubbornly block their minds as they listen to the Quran. Having resolved to reject it altogether, they argue with the Prophet alleging that the Quran is nothing but fables told by the ancients. They turn away from it and they forbid others to listen to it. Having depicted the attitude they adopt in this life, the Quran describes their miserable state as they are made to stand before the fire of hell, facing the horror of their destiny, powerless, and without support. The only thing they can do is wish to go back to life in order to change those views and practices which led them to this horrible end. Their wishes, however, are rejected as petty and childish: (6:25-6:28)

Here, we have two contrasting scenes: the one in this life is char-

acterized by stubborn rejection, while the other, in the hereafter, is a situation of profound regret. They are portrayed in such a way so as to help awaken human nature that has been left to rust for a long time. If only human nature would open up to the Quran and reflect on its message, it would gain the chance to be spared a fearful destiny.

And among them are those who listen to you. But We laid sheathes on their hearts so that they not understand it and in their ears is a heaviness. And if they are to see every sign they will not believe in it. So that when they drew near you, they dispute with you. Those who were ungrateful say: This is nothing but fables of the ancient ones. (6:25) This is a description of a particular type of people who listen but do not understand as if they do not have minds to help them comprehend, or ears to help them hear. This type of person may exist any time, anywhere. Their listening to what is being said has no effect whatsoever. Their ears do not function and their comprehension is sealed, so that the meaning of what they hear does not register with them.

Their eyes are open, but they do not seem to see, or what they see delivers no message to their minds. What has happened to them, then? What prevents them from responding when they have ears, eyes, and minds? God tells us: *But We laid sheathes on their hearts so that they not understand it.* (6:25) It is God who has willed that their faculty of comprehension remains unable to grasp the truth and that their hearing does not function. We should try, then, to understand the wisdom behind God's will.

All indicators to the truth and pointers to the right way and to faith were displayed in front of the idolaters. The Quran repeatedly drew their attention to countless signs and indications which they recognize within themselves and in the world around them. Had they only thought objectively about these, they would have awakened to the truth and responded to it. But they have made no effort to receive guidance. On the contrary, they suppressed their own nature, and in consequence, God placed a veil between them and proper guidance. They did not go to the Prophet with open hearts, ears and eyes in order to listen, see and reflect. They went to argue and dispute: *This is nothing but fables of the ancient ones.* (6:25)

TRUTH AND FABLES

All this effort which they exerted to refrain and prevent others from listening to the Quran and allowing themselves to be influenced by it or respond to it was a recipe for disaster: *And they cause to perish, no doubt, none but themselves, but they are not aware.* (6:26)

Whom would a person ruin if all his efforts were geared towards preventing himself and others from listening to proper guidance and following the right way that ensures salvation?

A Wish Availing Nothing

This (6:27) is the scene which contrasts with their situation in this life. Now they are in a state of regret, humility and total loss. This is compared with their attitude when they turned away from guidance, using their power to force others to also turn away, and boasting about their own strength and influence.

Now they cannot turn away, use their argumentation, or repeat their falsehoods. If we were to see them ourselves in such a position, we would be sure to see something fearful. Their dearest wish would be: *Would that we be returned to life.* (6:27) They know that the Quran is God's revelation, and their desire to return to earth is such that they may have a second chance when they no longer deny these revelations. They claim that they would make sure that they would be among the believers.

All these are wishes that have no way of coming true. They do not know their own nature, which will always reject the faith. When they say that if they could return they would be believers is nothing but a lie, because it does not match with what they would do if their wishes were answered. They only make these assertions because they have come to realize how wicked and evil they are. What they used to conceal from their followers in order to portray an image of themselves as successful and prosperous is now laid bare: *Nay! Shown to themselves will be what they had been concealing before. And even if they were returned, they would revert to what they were prohibited from there and, truly, they are the ones who lie.* (6:28)

God knows their nature very well and He is fully aware that they will stubbornly continue in their falsehood. He is also fully aware that it is only the fearsome situation in which they find themselves as they stand by the fire that causes them to utter such wishes and to make these promises. But the real situation is this: *And even if they were returned, they would revert to what they were prohibited from there and, truly, they are the ones who lie.* (6:28) They are, thus, left to their miserable destiny. This answer confronts them with the truth as they endure their humiliation. (6:29-6:30)

In their ignorance, as much as because of it, the ungrateful Arabs could not conceive of a second life or believe in it. They could not simply imagine another world, different from this present one of ours. They could not conceive how a human being could aspire to horizons beyond the physical world. Their concepts and feelings

were not much different from those of animals. It is the same situation we witness today in the modern type of tribal honor, whose exponents describe as 'scientific': *They said: There is nothing but this, our present life and we are not ones who will be raised up.* (6:29)

CONTRASTING CONCEPTS AND VALUES

The section now opens two new pages to draw two contrasting scenes. The first looks at this present life where the ungrateful make their assertions that there will be no resurrection, accountability or reward. The other is in the hereafter when they are stood before their Lord, and He asks them about the positions they adopted in their first life: *Is this not The Truth?* (6:30) The very question jolts them violently.

This accounts for the strong and deep rhythm which we notice in this part of the section which runs like a very fast river. God knows well that it is within human nature to respond to such a strong and deep rhythm. It opens up its receptive elements, awaiting instructions, in order to respond to them. We must not forget, however, that everything that is mentioned about the hereafter is simply the truth. (6:30)

This is the eventual destiny of those who claimed that there was nothing beyond our present life and that they would never be raised up again. It is a miserable, shameful, humiliating destiny as they are brought before their Lord, having persistently denied that they would face Him. They cannot stir. They are depicted as if they were led by the neck until they are stood in that awesome surrounding, facing the questioning: *Is this not the truth?* (6:30) What a humiliating question! There is only one possible reply: *They would say: Yea, by Our Lord.* (6:30) Now they are face to face with their Lord, on the occasion that they most stubbornly refused to believe in.

In a summary way, which most befits the awesome scene, the divine order is given, sealing their fate: *Then, experience the punishment for what you had been ungrateful.* (6:30) This is the most suitable destiny for those who denied themselves the comfort of a wider human concept, following instead an exceedingly narrow material concept. They have refused to raise themselves to the level that fits a noble humanity. They conducted their lives on the basis of their profane, hollow concept. By so doing, they actually earned their own punishment and this fits with the nature of those who deny the hereafter.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message tells the ungrateful what the result of their denying the signs of God will be. What is the result of the ungrateful's denial of the signs of God? On the Day of Judgment, the ungrateful will wish that they could be returned to this life in order to accept the signs of God. When before their Lord, they would admit that the Quran is stating the Truth. It would be too late to avoid the punishment. Those who deny the Last Day will not be returned to this life to change their ways and even if they were to be returned to this life, they still would not believe. The Day of Judgment is the Day when each person will be judged for what they did. Those who deny the Day of Judgment in this life will be punished in the next life. There will be a Day of Judgment.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I thoroughly understand the requirements of the Quranic Studies class, how it is taught and what is expected of me.

I was able to ask questions about the grading policies and for advice on how best to prepare for class?

I feel I was an active learner?

I was able to work ideas into my thinking by active reading, writing, speaking, and listening?

LESSON 55(4). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY CLARIFYING AND ANALYZING THE MEANINGS OF WORDS OR PHRASES

Critical thinkers of Quranic studies have clear thoughts about the Quranic signs. They perceive the concepts and recognize what kind of evidence is needed to analyze the meaning of Quranic words. They know that just giving a definition is not sufficient. They must also be able to give examples of the Quranic concept. On the other hand, uncritical thinkers see words drifting through their minds. They are not able to give examples of the concepts of the words or to critique their use of the concept.

God reveals the truth in the Quran in a variety of ways, some explicit and others by allusion, the latter mainly through the modality of the signs, in order to provoke and engage the human intellect. The signs of God cannot be read just from the face of the signs, but require thinking and reflection. This is indicated in the phrase: *We shall cause them to see Our signs* ... which suggests that the signs may not be instantaneously visible to the naked eye. The whole concept of the signs seeks to forge a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We have sent forth to you ... so that you may meditate on its signs, and those imbued with intuition may recollect.* (38 29) A sign is also a portent and allusion to something other than itself and should not therefore be seen as the final message and purpose of the revelation containing it.

GUIDE: When giving examples and discussing them, you should begin with the clearest and most obvious cases and their opposite. Once your class has discussed them at length can more controversial or difficult concepts be discussed.

HISTORY

An incident reported by Ibn Ishaq took place close to the pilgrimage season. A meeting attended by a large number of Makkans and chaired, as it were, by al-Walid ibn al-Mughayrah, defined their strategy for a defamation campaign. In his opening address, al-Walid said: Now that the pilgrimage season is approaching, people will start arriving from all over the place. They must have heard about your friend [meaning the Prophet]. So you had better agree what to say when you are asked about him. We must guard against having too many opinions, particularly if they are mutually contradictory.[10]

When his audience asked his advice as to what they should say, he preferred to listen to their suggestions first. What concerned al-Walid most was that the opinion they would come out with should take account of the fact that Muhammad was asking people to listen to the Quran, God's message, expressed in the most beautiful lan-

guage and employing the most powerful of styles. The description they would attach to Muhammad should also account for his persuasive, eloquent argument.

Descriptions like 'fortune-teller', 'madman', 'poet' and 'magician' were proposed. None was considered convincing by al-Walid, who pointed out weaknesses in each, one after the other. He told his people that what Muhammad said was nothing like what was said by such men. When nobody could suggest anything more plausible, they asked al-Walid to come up with a better suggestion.

He said: What Muhammad says is certainly beautiful. It is like a date tree with solid roots and rich fruit. Every one of these suggestions you have made is bound to be recognized as false. The least disputable one is to claim that he is a magician who repeats magic words which make a man fall out with his father, mother, wife and clan. They all approved of al-Walid's suggestion and set about preparing their propaganda campaign to make the pilgrims wary of Muhammad and unwilling to meet him.

Another version of this story suggests that when al-Walid showed signs of appreciating the Quran some people in Makkah said: If al-Walid will desert his religion, all the Quraysh people will follow suit. Abu Jahl then said: I will take care of him. He then went to him and said what we have learned of in the above reports. When al-Walid came up with his ill-conceived suggestion, he justified it in the following words: It is sorcery. We all see how it causes friction between a person and his family, children and members of his household. All these reports confirm that these ungrateful did not think that the Prophet Muhammad was telling them something untrue when he conveyed God's message to them. They only persisted with their disbelief for the sort of reasons indicated in these reports and because they realized that the triumph of Muhammad's message meant that they would have to give up their authority which rightly belonged to God, and which they had unfairly and unjustifiably usurped. They knew their language very well and they perfectly understood the meaning of the declaration that there is no deity other than God, which is the cornerstone of the Quranic faith. They simply did not want to put that declaration into practice, because it meant an all-out rebellion against any authority, other than that of God, which aimed to regulate human life. God certainly tells the truth when He says: We know too well that what they say grieves you. Yet it is not you that they charge with falsehood; but it is God's revelations that the wrongdoers deny. The term 'wrongdoers' refers to the ungrateful, and is frequently used in the Quran in this context.[11]

QURANIC CHAPTER 6: THE FLOCKS (AL-ANAM)
SIGNS 6:31-6:41

Makkah: *Surely, those lost*
who denied the meeting with God
until when the Hour drew near them suddenly,
they would say: What a regret for us that we neglected in it!
And they will carry heavy loads on their backs.
How evil is what they bear! (6:31)
And this present life is nothing but a pastime and diversion.
And the Last Abode is better for those who are God-conscious.
Will you not, then, be reasonable? (6:32)
Surely, We know that what they say disheartens ***you****.*
Truly, they deny ***you*** *not.*
Rather the ones who are unjust negate the signs of God. (6:33)
And, certainly, Messengers before ***you***
were denied yet they endured
patiently that they were denied
and they were maligned until Our help approached them.
And no one will change the Word of God.
And, certainly, there drew near ***you*** *tidings*
of the ones who are sent. (6:34)
If their turning aside had been troublesome to ***you****,*
then, if ***you*** *were able, be looking for a hole in the earth*
or a ladder to heaven so that ***you*** *would bring them some sign.*
If God willed, He would have gathered them to The Guidance.
Be ***you*** *not among the ones who are ignorant.* (6:35)
It is only those who hear who respond.
As for the dead, God will raise them up.
Again, they are returned to Him. (6:36)
And they said: Why was a sign not sent down to him
from his Lord?
Say: Truly, God is One Who Has Power
over what sign He sends down,
except most of them know not. (6:37)
And there is no moving creature in or on the earth,
none that is a fowl flying with its two wings,
but they are communities like yours.
We neglected not anything in the Book.
Again, they will be assembled to their Lord. (6:38)
And those who denied Our signs
are unwilling to hear and unwilling to speak.
They are in the shadows.

Whomever God wills, He causes to go astray.
And whomever He wills, He lays on a straight path. (6:39)
Say: Considered you that if the punishment of God
approached you
or the Hour approached you,
would you call to any other than God
if you had been ones who are sincere? (6:40)
Nay! To Him alone you would call
and He would remove that for which you call to Him
—if He willed—and you will forget
whatever partners you ascribe with Him. (6:41)

COMMENTARY°

WHAT THE UNBELIEVERS ACTUALLY REJECT

The scene portraying the final outcome decreed by God is now complemented with a statement of the truth of its causes: *Surely, those lost who denied the meeting with God until when the Hour drew near them suddenly, they would say: What a regret for us that we neglected in it!* (6:31) It is indeed an utter loss because it includes the loss of this world, since they have spent their lifetime caring only for what is petty, low and profane, and the loss of the hereafter as we have already seen. Those deluded, ignorant people have not taken any precautions against what comes to them as a sudden shock: *And they will carry heavy loads on their backs. How evil is what they bear!*(6:31)

The passage then portrays a terrible scene which strikes fear in the listener's heart, followed by one of complete and utter loss. These two scenes are then followed by a statement of the real weight and value of this life and the life hereafter according to God's measure: *And this present life is nothing but a pastime and diversion. And the Last Abode is better for those who are God-conscious. Will you not, then, be reasonable?* (6:32)

The nature of the hereafter is something which has not been explained to us in detail. Therefore, believing in it gives us a broader vision and nobler thinking. To work for it ensures better results for the God-conscious which can easily be recognized by those who use their reason: *Will you not, then, be reasonable?* (6:32)

In this new round or wave (6:33-6:39), an address is made to the Prophet. It begins with God consoling and comforting him. He, honest and truthful, was particularly distressed ' at the charges of falsehood that were laid at his door. Here, he is told by his Lord that they never thought him a liar, but used this as a ploy to maintain their

stubborn denial of God's signs and their rejection of the faith. He is also comforted with the information that earlier messengers of God were similarly accused of falsehood and subjected to abuse, and that they endured all this with patience. Eventually, they were given God's help to triumph, in accordance with the consistent laws He has set in operation. When the comforting and reassurance are over, the address makes clear the essential truth concerning God's message. It moves according to God's will and His laws. Its advocates have nothing to do with it other than to convey it to people and to make it clear. Other than that, it is God who decides what happens to it. Hence, its advocates, including the Prophet himself, have nothing to decide other than to continue with their task, without hastening its moves or suggesting anything to God. They are not to pay any attention to people's suggestions concerning its strategy, the proofs that may be given of its truth or the miracles needed to prove it. The point is that those who are alive and have the power of hearing will respond. On the other hand, those whose hearts are dead will not. The ultimate decision belongs to God: He may give people life or keep them dead until they return to Him on the Day of Judgment.

The people the Prophet was addressing demanded a miracle like the ones granted earlier Prophets. God is certainly able to give them such a miracle, but He, in His wisdom, does not wish to do so. If the Prophet is so distressed by their turning away, then let him try, by his own human effort, to bring them such a miracle. God is the Creator of all living creatures, and He knows all their secrets and the differences in their nature. He leaves those human beings who reject His message to wander in the deep darkness, deaf and dumb. He leaves some to go astray and guides others to the truth, according to His infallible knowledge of His different creatures.

HONEST NO DOUBT

Surely, We know that what they say disheartens thee. Truly, they deny you not. Rather the ones who are unjust negate the signs of God. (6:33)

The ungrateful Arabs with their idolatrous beliefs, particularly those of them who took upon themselves the unworthy task of opposing the message of the Quran, had no doubt that Muhammad was telling the truth. They have known him to be truthful and honest. They knew that he had never told a lie before starting to convey God's message. Those who were most hardened in their opposition to him did not doubt the truthfulness of his message either. They knew that the Quran could not have been authored by a human being. They, nevertheless, stubbornly refused to declare their belief or to

embrace a new faith. Their reason for rejecting it was not that they could not believe the Prophet; rather, it was their realization that his message threatened their positions and influence. Hence, they decided to deny God's revelations and to stick to their idolatrous beliefs. There are numerous reports that clearly state the reasons behind the Quraysh's attitude. We will now look at just a few of these.

KNOWING THE TRUTH WHO GIVES A FAVORABLE RESPONSE?

Having given the Prophet this consolation, the section reminds him of what happened to past messengers, some of whose history is given in the Quran. They endured abuse and hardship with patience and moved along the way God had shown them until they were granted victory by God. This is, then, an assertion that meeting affliction was only natural for God's messengers. The outcome must never be precipitated even though the advocates of the divine message may be subjected to torture, abuse, denial and other hardships: *And, certainly, Messengers before **you** were denied yet they endured patiently that they were denied and they were maligned until Our help approached them. And no one will change the Word of God. And, certainly, there drew near **you** tidings of the ones who are sent.* (6:34)

Advocates of God's message have continued along the same difficult way, overcoming numerous hurdles. They move along with steady steps, opposed by wrongdoers of all sorts, rejected by those who have chosen to go astray and their followers. Harm may be inflicted on some of those advocates, pressure, torture, and death. Yet the advocates of the truth will move on, maintaining their way, undeterred. The outcome remains the same, long as it may take. At the end of the road awaits victory, granted by God: *And, certainly, Messengers before **you** were denied yet they endured patiently that they were denied and they were maligned until Our help approached them.* (6:34)

Seriousness is further heightened in order to counter what might have been entertained by God's Messenger of a keen, kindly desire to make his people recognize guidance. It also deals with any hope he may have entertained that their request for a sign, so that they may accept God's message, might be answered. The same desire was similarly entertained by other Muslims at the time, as later signs in this section explain. This was a perfectly natural human desire. However, in order to make a final statement about the nature of this message, its method, the roles of earlier messengers and people in its promotion and progress, the Quran makes this very clear delineation of the

right attitude: (6:35-6:36)

These are majestic words, portraying an awesome scene. We cannot appreciate fully the whole idea unless we recall vividly that these are words addressed by God, the Lord of all worlds, to his noble Prophet who has shown maximum perseverance and who is one of the small number of messengers endowed with the strongest resolve. He patiently endured all that his people tried to inflict on him.

However, in His superior wisdom, God has created us for a particular purpose of His own, giving us certain abilities that are different from those of angels. This has meant that we should contain within ourselves varying ability to receive guidance and pointers to faith and able to make different responses to them. We have a range of ability to determine our direction so that justice is maintained, as we receive reward for following guidance or punishment for our deliberate error. For this reason, God has not brought all humanity together to His guidance by a decree He promulgates. He has only commanded us to follow His guidance, and given us the ability to choose either to obey or disobey Him. At the end, everyone will have his fair reward. The Prophet is told to keep this in mind and not to ignore it: *If their turning aside had been troublesome to you, then, if you were able, be looking for a hole in the earth or a ladder to heaven so that you would bring them some sign. If God willed, He would have gathered them to The Guidance. Be you not among the ones who are ignorant.* (6:35)

This is followed by an explanation of the nature God has given to humanity, and their different attitudes to His guidance which lacks no proof: *It is only those who hear who respond. As for the dead, God will raise them up. Again, they are returned to Him.* (6:36)

In their attitude to the truth sent down by God from on high and preached by His Messenger, people can be divided into two groups: one who are alive, opening up their receptive faculties and responding to divine guidance. They find such guidance to be strong, clear, consistent with human nature and easily heard. Hence, there is no problem with responding to it: *It is only those who hear who respond.* (6:36)

The other group are dead, their nature out of order and, as such, they cannot listen or respond. They do not lack any evidence of the truth, because the evidence is inherent in it. Once it touches human nature, response is certain. What this group actually lack is to have their nature awakened and their responses activated. The Prophet can do nothing to such people. Proofs have no use for them. Their case is left to God. He may raise them up if they show that they deserve to be brought to life. By the same token, however, He may not raise

them up at all in this life. He may leave them dead despite their moving about in this world, until they return to Him in the hereafter: *As for the dead, God will raise them up. Again, they are returned to Him.* (6:36)

This is, then, the full explanation of responding to guidance or rejecting it. It sets out all the issues clearly, outlining the role of God's Messenger and leaving the ultimate decision to God who accomplishes what He wills.

WHO NEEDS MIRACULOUS EVIDENCE?

The section then refers to the request of the ungrateful that a sign in the form of something supernatural be sent down to the Prophet. It points out that such a request betrays ignorance of God's law and the mercy. He shows them by not responding to their request. Were they to continue with their rejection after a supernatural sign is given them, they would be destroyed.

The section mentions their request and comments that most of them do not know what it entails or the reason for its rejection. It states that God is certainly able to give them the miraculous sign they want, but His wisdom and grace have stopped the woeful doom that is certain to follow: *And they said: Why was a sign not sent down to him from his Lord? Say: Truly, God is One Who Has Power over what sign He sends down, except most of them know not.* (6: 37)

The Quran then begins another gentle approach to awaken their senses, inviting them to reflect on the numerous pointers to faith which they see all around them: *And there is no moving creature in or on the earth, none that is a fowl flying with its two wings, but they are communities like yours. We neglected not anything in the Book. Again, they will be assembled to their Lord.* (6:38)

This round concludes with a statement that God's will and law remain operative when people choose either to follow His guidance or to go astray: *And those who denied Our signs are unwilling to hear and unwilling to speak. They are in the shadows. Whomever God wills, He causes to go astray. And whomever He wills, He lays on a straight path.* (6:39)

This is indeed a reiteration in a new form, using a different scene, of what has been stated earlier in this passage concerning the fact that only those who listen attentively will respond, while those who are unwilling to hear or speak can make no response.

A SYSTEM BEARING NO COMPARISON

We see in this passage how the Quran tackles the issue. It states that those who reject this faith and try to suppress it know full well

that they are only called upon to follow the truth. They realize that the Messenger who conveys it to humanity tells the truth. Nevertheless, they refuse to respond. Indeed they persist, for certain ulterior motives, in their stubborn rejection. They realize that this truth has an intrinsic evidence to support it: it addresses human nature which responds to it positively once it is alive and receptive: *As for the dead, God will raise them up. Again, they are returned to Him.* (6:36) Those, on the other hand, who oppose the truth have dead hearts and they themselves are: *And those who denied Our signs are unwilling to hear and unwilling to speak. They are in the shadows.* (6:39)

The Quran also defines the role of God's Messenger, as also successive generations of advocates of the Quranic message. All that is required of them is to convey God's message and to follow the road God has chosen for them, despite the hardships they may have to face. People's responses to the same are beyond their terms of reference. People follow guidance or error in accordance with a divine law that will never change, even to accommodate God's Messenger's desire to get some of those whom he loves to follow the guidance he brings them from God. Nor will this law change as a result of his distress at what is done by those whom he must confront. His own person is not considered here. He will not be accountable for the number of those who follow guidance as a result of his efforts. He is judged on the basis of his efforts and his obedience of his instructions. What happens to people afterwards is determined by their Lord: *Whomever God wills, He causes to go astray. And whomever He wills, He lays on a straight path.* (6:39) *If God willed, He would have gathered them to The Guidance. Be you not among the ones who are ignorant.* (6:35)

The Quranic directive in this passage makes it clear to God's Messenger and the believers that they must not entertain any desire to have a miraculous sign given to them, regardless of its type. The Prophet is told in plain terms: (6:35-6:36)

THE QURANIC DOCTRINE'S STARTING POINT

In this passage, we have one of the various ways in which the Quran addresses human nature. It establishes a link between human nature and the existence of the universe, leaving the latter to work its full inspiration on it. God knows that when such inspiration, profound and strong as it is, touches human nature it will certainly respond: *It is only those who hear who respond.* (6:36)

The pattern which we have in this passage begins in this way: *And they said: Why was a sign not sent down to him from his Lord? Say: Truly, God is One Who Has Power over what sign He sends*

down, except most of them know not.(6:37) This sign reports what is said by those who denied God's revelations and demanded a miracle which would have had a temporary effect on their own generation. It then refers to the destruction which would have followed, had the suggestion been acted upon. God is certainly well able to accomplish any miracle, but it is the bestowing of His mercy that prevents it. It is His wisdom that precludes acting on their suggestion. Then, suddenly, their attention is made to turn from their little world to the wide expanse of the universe with all the great signs which they see in the universe around them and which are far greater than the one they demanded. The signs in the universe are permanent, available for all generations to behold: *And there is no moving creature in or on the earth, none that is a fowl flying with its two wings, but they are communities like yours. We neglected not anything in the Book. Again, they will be assembled to their Lord.* (6:38)

This is a great fact which at that time, when humanity had not developed and regulated its branches of science, they could understand by mere observation alone. They could see animals, birds and insects grouping in communities, each of which has its own characteristics and rules. As human knowledge develops, this fact has greater application, but human knowledge cannot add to its basis. Relevant to it, however, is the fact that God's knowledge is absolute and total and it is He who manages everything in the universe. The facts that people can observe around them testify to the great truism of God's Oneness and His Lordship over all the universe. Could the physical miracle they demanded provide more than that? They have the great miracle of creation in front of them. They see its manifestations and effects in every direction they turn.

In this particular example, the Quranic method presents human nature neither with theoretical or dialectic argument, nor any material or logical theory. It only puts it face to face with practical existence, what is perceptible of it and what is imperceptible. It then invites human nature to react to it and respond to its inspiration within a well-defined and regulated system, so that it does not lose its way.

It then provides the following comment on the attitudes of those who deny such magnificent signs: *And those who denied Our signs are unwilling to hear and unwilling to speak. They are in the shadows. Whomever God wills, He causes to go astray. And whomever He wills, He lays on a straight path.* (6:39) What an apt description of the rejecters for they are indeed deaf and dumb, groping along in darkness. The Quranic sign states God's law with regard to guidance and error, stating that God's will operates either way in accordance with the nature God has given to man.

We, thus, have a full concept of man's position. We have a clear idea of the appropriate method of presenting the Quranic message to others. We also have a definitive statement of how an advocate of the Quranic way should operate and make his address to human beings in all situations and at all times.

THE ONLY HOPE

Here(6:40-6:41) we have one of the various methods the Quran employs to address human nature. We have already seen how the Quran draws people's attentions to the elaborate system of life and the multitude of living creatures, and how God's knowledge is total, flawless, absolute. Here, the Quranic address makes use of God's power and how human nature reacts when it reflects on any aspect of God's might, shaking off all traces of idolatry. Thus, human nature regains its freedom and tears off what used to prevent it from acquiring proper knowledge of its Lord and believing in His Oneness: *Say: Considered you that if the punishment of God approached you or the Hour approached you, would you call to any other than God if you had been ones who are sincere?* (6:40)

Human nature is, thus, put face to face with the possibility of total destruction which may come as punishment in this life, or with the totally unexpected arrival of the Last Hour. Once human nature is made to visualize this eventuality, it responds positively to the truth. God knows that such a positive response remains latent within it. Human nature is shaken as it must own up to the truth it knows. God puts the question to the ungrateful, demanding a verbal answer to express their true, natural feelings: *Say: Considered you that if the punishment of God approached you or the Hour approached you, would you call to any other than God if you had been ones who are sincere?* (6:40)

The section then states the true answer which corresponds to their natural feelings, although they may not give it verbal expression: *Nay! To Him alone you would call and He would remove that for which you call to Him—if He willed—and you will forget whatever partners you ascribe with Him.*(6:41)

Thus, all thoughts of idolatry are forgotten. The fearful prospect lays human nature bare, and thus it turns to God alone for security. Its knowledge of the true Lord is deeply rooted within it. Idolatrous beliefs are no more than a superficial, thin covering that beclouds human nature through external factors. When human nature is shaken by this fearful prospect, this covering falls off and the truth comes to the surface. Thus, our natural reactions operate and we turn to our Lord, praying to be spared that fate to which it has no answer.

Within this description of the natural human reaction to the prospect of God's punishment, we are told of God's response. He may, if He so pleases, respond to their supplication and remove what they fear. His will is free, unrestrained. It is His choice whether to respond to them or not and whether to remove the ill they fear in full or in part. In this, the only operative factors are His knowledge, wisdom and will.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

QURANIC SIGN 2:260

When Abraham said? My Lord! Cause me to see how You shall give life to the dead. He said: Shall you (Abraham) not believe? He (Abraham) said: Yea, but so my heart may be at rest. He (God) said: Then take four birds and twist them to yourself. Moreover, lay a part of them on every mountain. Call to them. They will approach you coming eagerly. Know that God is Almighty, Wise. (2:260)

QUESTIONS 2:260:

What did the Quranic text imply by "heart at rest"?

What example does it give?

Is this an example of everyone having to agree?

What is the difference? How could the example be changed to illustrate the term?

You can use a number of techniques to learn to analyze concepts. Instead of just finding a definition of a word, try to paraphrase the word or concept to something that you already understand. You can also add examples from your classmates to the list.

Rewrite passages, making them clear to yourself. For example, a Quranic passage that explains how "heart at rest" means that one is at peace about something.

LESSON 55(5). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
READING CRITICALLY: CLARIFYING OR DISCERNING THE SACRED TEXT

Critical thinkers read with a healthy skepticism. But they do not doubt or deny until they understand. They clarify before they judge. They expect intelligibility from what they read. Critical readers ask themselves questions as they read, wonder about the implications of, reasons for, examples of, and meaning of the sacred text. They do not approach written material as a collection of sentences, but as a whole, trying out various interpretations until one fits all of the sign or signs, rather than ignoring or distorting statements that don't fit their interpretation.

> According to al-Ghazzali, our beliefs arise from our intellect (*aql*). According to traditional sources, thought is the power of the mind (heart) that facilitates knowledge. Based on this definition, thinking: is the movement of that power that is driven by the intellect. It can only occur when an initial image of the subject is attainable in the mind of the thinker.
>
> Further, the Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the sacred text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge espoused with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression understands the religion, signifying a rational and inquisitive approach to constructing a worldview of Islam. Islam, in other words, advises analytical knowledge and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely dogmatic approach. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions faith based on detailed analysis as opposed to undigested and un-comprehended faith. The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the clerics of all the leading schools of thought....
>
> Thus, if there are hadith reports, or any factual reports for that matter, which do not stand to reason and understanding, they would be most likely discounted and abandoned, with the exception only of devotional matters (*ibadat*) which are based on faith and submission more than on rational analysis....
>
> Another feature of the Quranic vision of thinking is indicated in its emphasis on wisdom and good judgment (*hikmah*) which signifies the quality of thinking, its regard for values, and its outcome. Wisdom and good judgment can easily be said to be more important than technical know-how and expertise, as it can guide expert knowledge

as to its proper application and the attainment of excellence.

The Quran mentions *hikmah* twenty times, and in about ten of these it is immediately preceded by the word *kitab*, which is a reference to divine scripture—primarily the Quran, but also other divinely revealed scriptures. The text thus says with reference to Jesus that God Most High will teach him the Scripture and wisdom (*hikmah*), the Torah and the Gospel....

The juxtaposition of book and wisdom is often contextualized by a reference to the sending of prophets who teach the people and guide them with scripture and wisdom as it is said of the Prophet Muhammad (as well as) ... the descendants of Prophet Abraham.

The holistic, superior, and indivisible value of hikmah in the Quran is underscored in one of its verses to the effect that when God bestows wisdom on someone that person is indeed granted an immense source of goodness.... To mention wisdom together with the Book evidently means that the Quran should be read with wisdom and divorcing the one from the other by taking a totally dogmatic approach to the Quran goes against the divine purpose and intention of its revelation. To read the Quran in the light of wisdom thus means a comprehensive reading that reaches beyond the obvious meaning of its words to encapsulate the goal and purpose of its message and then also reflection on the ways and means of how its benefits can be realized for the individual and society.[12]

Quranic Chapter 6: The Flocks (al-Anam) Signs 6:42-6:50

Makkah: *And, certainly, We sent to communities*
that were before ***you****.*
Then, We took them with desolation and tribulation
so that perhaps they will lower themselves to Us. (6:42)
Then, why when drew near them Our might,
they lowered not themselves?
Rather, their hearts became hard.
And Satan made appear pleasing to them
what they had been doing. (6:43)
So when they forgot about what they were reminded in it,
We opened to them the doors of everything.
Until when they were glad with what they were given,
We suddenly took them.
That is when they were ones who are seized with despair. (6:44)
So cut off were the last remnant of the folk who did wrong.
And The Praise belongs to God, Lord of the worlds. (6:45)

Say: Considered you that if God took
your having the ability to hear
and your sight and sealed over your hearts,
what god other than God restores them to you?
Look on how We diversify the signs!
Again, they still drew aside. (6:46)
Say: Considered you
that if the punishment of God approached you
suddenly or publicly, will anyone be caused to perish but the folk,
the ones who are unjust? (6:47)
We send not the ones who are sent,
but as ones who give good tidings and ones who warn.
So whoever believed and made things right,
then, there will be neither fear in them
nor will they feel remorse. (6:48)
But those who denied Our signs,
the punishment will afflict them because
they had been disobeying. (6:49)
Say: I say not to you: With me are treasures of God
nor that I know the unseen nor say I to you
that I am an angel.
I follow only what is revealed to me.
Say: Are they on the same level
— the unwilling to see and the seeing?
Will you, then, not reflect? (6:50)

COMMENTARY°

The communities whose history God relates to His Messenger and his followers have benefited nothing by the trials to which they were put. They made no appeal to God. They did not mend their erring ways but persisted with their rejection of the truth, which Satan portrayed to them as good and proper. God then allowed them a respite and gave them provisions in plenty: (6:44)

God's punishment befell them when they were fully drunk with the pleasures of this life. They were left confused, hopeless, unable to think where to turn. They were destroyed: (6:45) The Arabic text refers to the very last one of each of these communities. If this one was wiped out then everyone else faced the same destiny. The phrase, 'the wrongdoing people', means here those who associated partners with God. This is a frequently used expression in the Quran referring to idolatry as wrongdoing and idolaters as wrongdoers: *So cut off were the last remnant of the folk who did wrong. And The Praise be-*

longs to God, Lord of the worlds. (6:45)

As this scene sends a shiver into people's hearts, it shows how hollow and erroneous the concept of idolatry is. The section wonders at those who are shown different, wide-ranging and multi-faceted signs, beckoning them to faith, and yet still they turn away: (6:46)

They are hardly allowed to take their breath before they are put face to face with another possibility that may well not be far away from them. They are shown their own destruction as they are indeed the wrongdoers, a term which is often used interchangeably with those who associate partners with God. The scene here paints the destruction of the wrongdoers when they are taken unawares or when God's punishment is inflicted on them in open daylight: (6:47)

When this passage of warning has reached its peak, having portrayed several scenes, making inspiring comments on each of them and giving serious warnings which have their effect on people's hearts, it is concluded with a statement outlining the task of God's messengers. Their communities demand supernatural miracles but their duty is merely to convey a message, bringing happy news and giving stern warnings. They have no say in people's fate, which is determined by the attitudes people choose to adopt for themselves: (6:48-6:49)

DETAILED ANALYSIS

The fact remains that human nature recognizes its Lord well and submits to Him declaring its belief in His Oneness. Should it fall for a while under a covering that screens facts and prevents it from seeing them, all that covering will fall off once human nature is shaken by a calamity. It regains its vision and returns to its Lord, humble, submissive, believing. All the schemes of the enemies of faith require no more than a clear declaration of the truth, and they will soon collapse. Human nature thus returns to faith. Evil will not have total mastery while there remains on the face of this earth people who will make this declaration. By the grace of God, there will always remain people to make this declaration of the truth, no matter how the advocates of falsehood try to wipe them out. (6:42-6:45)

These signs place before our eyes an historical example of how people expose themselves to God's might and what happens to them in consequence. God gives them one chance after another and issues them with successive reminders, but they still forget. If the trials they encounter do not persuade them to turn to God and implore Him, and if His grace which they enjoy does not prompt them to be grateful and to guard against evil, then their nature has become irremediably corrupt and their lives are no longer worth extending. God's punish-

ment befalls them and their world is destroyed: (6:42-6:43)

In these signs we have a full outline of an example that has repeated itself several times: communities that have received God's messengers but rejected their messages. God then tested them with hardship and tribulation that involved their lives, properties and general situations. Such hardship and tribulation obviously fell short of the punishment of total destruction to which reference is made in the preceding sign.

The hardship did not soften their hearts, open their minds and help them rid themselves of their stubbornness. Satan continued to portray their erring ways to them as fair and appealing:*And Satan made appear pleasing to them what they had been doing.* (6:43)

The communities whose history God relates to His Messenger and his followers have benefited nothing by the trials to which they were put. They made no appeal to God. They did not mend their erring ways but persisted with their rejection of the truth, which Satan portrayed to them as good and proper. God then allowed them a respite and gave them provisions in plenty: *So when they forgot about what they were reminded in it, We opened to them the doors of everything. Until when they were glad with what they were given, We suddenly took them. That is when they were ones who are seized with despair.* (6:44)

We have here a wonderful scene depicting a state full of life in the inimitable style of the Quran. *We opened to them the doors of everything.* (6:44) They enjoyed abundance of provisions and endless luxuries, but showed no gratitude to God for the grace He had bestowed on them. All they cared for was to indulge in the pleasures of this world, leaving no room in their lives for higher concerns. This corruption of their hearts and morals was followed by a corruption of their systems, and this naturally led to corruption being the mark of their lives. That was enough to trigger God's law which never fails: *We suddenly took them. That is when they were ones who are seized with despair.* (6:44)

God's punishment befell them when they were fully drunk with the pleasures of this life. They were left confused, hopeless, unable to think where to turn. They were destroyed: *So cut off were the last remnant of the folk who did wrong.* (6:45) The Arabic text refers to the very last one of each of these communities. If this one was wiped out then everyone else faced the same destiny. The phrase, `the wrongdoing people', means here those who associated partners with God. This is a frequently used expression in the Quran referring to idolatry as wrongdoing and idolaters as wrongdoers. *So cut off were the last remnant of the folk who did wrong.* (6:45)

The Prophet certainly tells the truth as he says: When you see that God has given a person plenty of what he likes in this world, despite his sinful practices, know that it is only a temptation and a test. He then quoted the Quranic sign: *So when they forgot about what they were reminded in it, We opened to them the doors of everything. Until when they were glad with what they were given, We suddenly took them. That is when they were ones who are seized with despair.*[13] (6:44)

IMPORTANT POINTS FOR REFLECTION

As the section moves on, it puts those who associate partners with God face to face with His might and how it may strike them personally, taking away their hearing and eyesight and sealing their hearts. They are defenseless against it, and they can find no deity other than God to return what God may take away from them. The scene depicted here is very vivid, showing them their total powerlessness against God's might. It also paints for them the stark reality of those partners they associate with God when they have to face a truly grave situation. The scene shakes them violently. God, the Creator of human nature knows how far it is affected by this scene and the truth it describes. Human nature realizes that God is able to take away people's hearing and sight and seal their hearts. None of these organs can then function at all. Should He do this, there is no other deity to reverse what He has done.

They are hardly allowed to take their breath before they are put face to face with another possibility that may well not be far away from them. They are shown their own destruction as they are indeed the wrongdoers, a term which is often used interchangeably with those who associate partners with God. The scene here paints the destruction of the wrongdoers when they are taken unawares or when God's punishment is inflicted on them in open daylight: *ay: Considered you that if the punishment of God approached you suddenly or publicly, will anyone be caused to perish but the folk, the ones who are unjust?* (6:47)

When this passage of warning has reached its peak, having portrayed several scenes, making inspiring comments on each of them and giving serious warnings which have their effect on people's hearts, it is concluded with a statement outlining the task of God's messengers. Their communities demand supernatural miracles but their duty is merely to convey a message, bringing happy news and giving stern warnings: (6:48-6:49)

Ignorant communities, including those that deviated from the proper concept elaborated by the divine messages, were rife with

such false ideas about the nature of prophethood and prophet. People expected anyone who claimed to be a prophet to come up with such miracles. They required him at times to make prophecies and at other times to influence natural phenomena, either through fortune-telling or sorcery. Indeed, it was in this vein that the pagan Arabs in Makkah made their demands of the Prophet Muhammad. To rectify such misconceptions, the Quran makes repeated statements on the nature of the divine message and the Messenger conveying it. One of these statements is the one we are currently discussing: *Say: Are they on the same level— the unwilling to see and the seeing? Will you, then, not reflect?* (6:50)

WHICH PATH THE PROPHET FOLLOWS

The Prophet is, therefore, ordered to present it to people as it is, without adornment or temptation. It requires none of these. Those who adopt it should know that they are not going to gain any material wealth or position by it. They shall have no distinction over other people except through their good actions. They are only opting for divine guidance which is much more valuable than wealth, position or distinction: *Say: Are they on the same level—the unwilling to see and the seeing? Will you, then, not reflect?* (6:50)

When they accept and adopt this, they should know that they bring themselves out of darkness and blindness into light and enlightenment: *Say: Are they on the same level— the unwilling to see and the seeing? Will you, then, not reflect?* (6:50) Besides, following divine revelations is, in itself, following proper guidance. A person who is left without such guidance remains blind. This is stated plainly in this sign. What role, then, is left to the human mind?

From the Quranic point of view, the answer to this question is very simple. The mind with which God has endowed us is able to receive His revelation and comprehend it. This is its role. Moreover, it is the opportunity available to us to follow God's guidance and to be equipped with the proper, infallible criterion.

Equipped with divine revelation and guidance, our human mind can see things clearly. Deprived of them, it is blind. We note that in the Quranic sign, the statement that the Prophet follows only what is revealed to him from on high is immediately followed by a reference to blindness and clear sight. It concludes with an exhortation to think and reflect:*I follow only what is revealed to me. Say: Are they on the same level— the unwilling to see and the seeing? Will you, then, not reflect?* (6:50) Such a sequence is particularly significant. Reflection is certainly needed, and the Quran calls on people to reflect. However, reflection must be guided by divine revelation so that it remains

enlightened. There is no virtue in reflection that is blind, groping in the dark, without guidance.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message asks: *Will you, then, not reflect?* (6:50) The message is to learn to reflect. The Prophet does not have the treasures of God with him nor does he know the unseen nor does he say that he is an angel. This indicates that he is a human being who only follows what is revealed to him. The unseeing and the seeing: they are not on the same level. Those who reflect on its message are among "the seeing."

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

Quranic critical thinkers clarify before they judge.

Quranic critical thinkers expect understanding from what they read.

Quranic critical thinkers check and double-check their understanding.

Quranic critical thinkers ask themselves questions.

Quranic critical thinkers wonder about the implications of or reasons for meaning and truth in what they learn.

Quranic critical thinkers learn so that they can ignore whatever does not fit their own personal interpretation or what of their own interpretation will distort what they are learning.

LESSON 55(6). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY

LISTENING CRITICALLY: THE ART OF SILENT DIALOGUE

Critical thinkers know that listening can either be done passively and uncritically or actively and critically. This is the case whether you are listening to the Quran in a language you understand or listening to your teacher's lesson. You know that it is not easy to understand what the Quranic text or another person is saying and then to integrate those thoughts into your own. When we compare speaking and listening, we know that when we speak, we hold on to our own ideas. We are able to arrange them in some order. We express our thoughts with which we are familiar. Listening to another, however is more difficult. In listening, we have to take the words we are hearing and translate them into our own words and ideas for them to make sense. We have not experienced the same things as the speaker. It is difficult to anticipate where the speaker's words are taking them. You have to be attentive to what the other person is saying. All of this requires active listening. Developing into an active listener requires time and practice. It also requires asking key questions.

HISTORY

It is reported that some of the Arabian 'notables' felt it unbecoming of them to respond to the Quranic call because the Prophet Muhammad kept his door open to poor and unsupported people such as Suhayb, Bilal, Ammar, Khabbab, Salman, Ibn Masud and others. These were poor people who could not change their sweat-stained clothes when they visited him. Their social position did not qualify them to be in the same meeting place as the Quraysh chiefs. Therefore, the chiefs asked the Prophet to drive them away, but he refused. They suggested to him that he should meet the two groups separately in order to give the chiefs their privileges, just as they enjoyed them in pre-Quranic society. Keen as he was to persuade them to accept the message, the Prophet considered the possibility of granting their request. His Lord made His command clear to him: *And drive not away those who call to their Lord in the morning and the evening, wanting His Countenance.* (6:52)

Saad ibn Abi Waqqas, a prominent Companion of the Prophet, reports: Six of us were with the Prophet when the ungrateful said to him: Drive away these so that they are not encouraged to go above their standing with us. With me were Abd Allah ibn Masud, a man from the Hudhayl, Bilal and two others.

The Prophet felt whatever God might have let him feel. He was deep in thought when God revealed to him the sign stating: *And drive not away those who call to their Lord in the morning and the evening, wanting His Countenance.*[14]

Al-Tabari relates on the authority of Ibn Masud: A group of Quraysh notables passed by the Prophet when he was with a group of Muslims who were of low status in Makkan society, including Suhayb, Ammar, Bilal and Khabbab. The notables said to the Prophet: Muhammad, are you happy to be with these from among your people? Are these the ones upon whom God has bestowed His favor from among us? Are we to follow these? Drive them away, for if you do so, we may follow you.

God then revealed the Quranic signs which states: *And drive not away those who call to their Lord in the morning and the evening, wanting His Countenance.* (6:52) *Thus, We tried some of them with others that they should say: Is it these to whom God showed grace from among us? Is not God greater in knowledge of the ones who are thankful?* (6:53)

Al-Tabari also attributes to Khabbab, one of the Prophet's Companions, the following report of the incident which led to the revelation of 6:52:

Al-Aqra ibn Habis of the tribe of Tamim and Uyaynah ibn Hisn of the Fazar once found the Prophet sitting with Bilal, Suhayb, Ammar, Khabbab and others who commanded no influence in Arabian society. They looked on them with contempt. They said to the Prophet: We would like you to establish a special time for us so that the Arabs will recognize our high position. Delegations come to you from all parts of Arabia and we feel ashamed to be seen with such people. When we come to see you, tell them to leave. When we depart, you may sit with them if you wish.

The Prophet agreed. They said: Could you put this in writing for us. The Prophet asked for a sheet of writing material and called Ali to write the same down. We were sitting a little further away. Then Gabriel, the angel, was sent down with these signs: (6:52-6:54)

The Prophet dropped the sheet and called us. We went to him and he said: Peace be upon you. Your Lord has committed Himself to bestow grace and mercy.

Thereafter, we used to sit with him. When he wished to leave, he would stand up and go. But then God revealed to him the sign: *And have you patience yourself with those who call to their Lord in the morning and the evening, wanting His Countenance. And let not your eyes pass over them wanting the adornment of this present life. And obey not him whose heart We made neglectful of Our Remembrance and who followed his own desires and whose affair had been excess.* (18:28) After that God's Messenger would sit with us. When it was his usual time to leave, we would leave first so that he could leave, if he so wished.

Subsequent to the revelation of these signs, the Prophet would always be the first to greet them, every time he saw them. He would say: Praise be to God who has made among my followers some people whom I am ordered to be the first to greet.

QURANIC CHAPTER 6: THE FLOCKS (AL-ANAM)
SIGNS 6:51-6:55

Makkah: *And warn with the Quran*
those who fear
that they will be assembled before their Lord.
Other than He there is neither a protector nor
an intercessor, so that perhaps they will be God-conscious. (6:51)
And drive not away those who call to their Lord
in the morning and the evening, wanting His Countenance.
*Their reckoning is not on **you** at all.*
*And **your** reckoning is not on them at all.*
*If **you** are to drive them away, then,*
***you** would be among the ones who are unjust.* (6:52)
Thus, We tried some of them with others that they should say:
Is it these to whom God showed grace from among us?
Is not God greater in knowledge
of the ones who are thankful? (6:53)
*And when drew near **you**, those who believe in Our signs,*
say: Peace be to you. Your Lord prescribed mercy for Himself
so that anyone of you who did evil in ignorance
—again, repented afterwards and made things right—
then, truly, He is Forgiving, Compassionate. (6:54)
And, thus, We explain Our signs distinctly
so that the way is indicated for the ones who sin. (6:55)

COMMENTARY°

A WARNING LOUD AND CLEAR

It is a mark of the Quranic way of life that it pays little regard to worldly values and petty human considerations. (6:51-6:54) God's Messenger has been commanded to present it to human beings as it is, without decoration, adornment or tempting promises. He was also commanded to pay particular attention to those who are likely to respond positively to his call and to ally himself with those who receive it well, willing to make a sincere effort to win God's pleasure. He was not to attach any weight to the values of a tribal honor society. His task was to warn those who fear what may happen to them when they are gathered to their Lord, on the Day of Resurrection, when

they shall have none to support or intercede for them. The fact remains that no one can intercede with God unless he is given permission to do so. Even with this permission, he can only intercede on behalf of those for whose benefit God allows intercession. Those who genuinely fear what will happen on that day have a strong claim to know the warning with which God's Messenger has been sent. They are more likely to benefit by it and respond to it.

If the Prophet explains it to them, they may be able to avoid in this life what may expose them to God's punishment in the life to come. The warning with which the Prophet has been sent outlines to them what they must avoid and gives them the motivation to do so: (6:51-6:52)

The Prophet is also ordered : *And drive not away those who call to their Lord in the morning and the evening, wanting His Countenance.* (6:52) This is an example of dedication, love and good manners. A person does not address his worship and supplication to God alone unless he is truly dedicated. He does not seek only God's pleasure unless he profoundly loves Him. When he combines the two qualities of worshipping God alone and seeking only His pleasure, he will have adopted the sort of manners worthy of a true believer.

Those Quraysh chiefs spoke ill of the poor whom the Prophet received well. They pointed to their poverty and weakness and claimed that their presence with God's Messenger was the reason behind the negative attitude adopted by the upper classes towards the Quranic message. God gave his final ruling on this question, totally refuting their claims: *Their reckoning is not on you at all. And your reckoning is not on them at all. If you were to drive them away, then, you would be among the ones who are unjust.* (6:52)

The arrogant Quraysh chiefs were not impressed. They wondered: how could God choose the poor and the weak to grant them guidance in preference to us? Had it been true that the message Muhammad preached was a message of goodness, they would not have been ahead of us in embracing it. God would have certainly guided us to it before them. They wondered: is it possible that God would grant them His favors in preference to us, when we are the people exercising power and enjoying wealth and high position in this city. This was, indeed, a test God set for those proud people. They were hardened on account of their wealth and distinguished family backgrounds. Yet they fared very badly because they could not appreciate the true nature of this faith and the type of social order it wanted people to establish. Needless to say, the social order that the Quranic message establishes takes humanity by the hand to elevate it to heights it cannot attain through any other means. When the

Quranic message was allowed to have its full play in the life of Arabia, the Arabs rose to heights they could not have imagined possible at the time. Indeed, even today, they cannot be imagined possible even by the most advanced of democratic systems.

THE MOST DESERVING OF GOD'S GRACE

It is an answer (6:53) loaded with pointed connotations. It clearly suggests that following right guidance is a reward given by God to those whom He knows to be truly grateful. In this way, they are favored with this particular aspect of divine grace. No amount of gratitude is sufficient in return for this act of grace. God, however, accepts the best that His servants can do and rewards them for it. His reward is always exceedingly generous.

It is clear from God's answer to that arrogant question that it is those people's sheer ignorance that gives rise to their objection to the selection of people on whom God bestows His grace. *Thus, We tried some of them with others that they should say: Is it these to whom God showed grace from among us? Is not God greater in knowledge of the ones who are thankful?* (6:53) Those who raise the question do not realize that God bestows this favor on the basis of His perfect knowledge. It is He who knows those who deserve such a favors from among His servants. Such ignorant objections also betray the objectors' bad manners.

God commands His Messenger to be the one who starts by greeting those on whom God has bestowed the grace of being among the early Muslims; the very ones whom the Quraysh chiefs ridiculed. The Prophet is further commanded to give them the happy news that God has committed Himself to grant them His mercy, as He will forgive those among them who mend their ways after having committed any bad deed out of ignorance: *And when drew near you, those who believe in Our signs, say: Peace be to you. Your Lord prescribed mercy for Himself so that anyone of you who did evil in ignorance—again, repented afterwards and made things right—then, truly, He is Forgiving, Compassionate.* (6:54)

Having given them the blessing of adopting the faith, and promised them easy reckoning on the Day of Judgment, God now honors them with His mercy. Indeed, He commits Himself to showing mercy to those who believe in Him. He also commands His Messenger to convey to them this commitment.

TEARING OFF THE MASKS OF EVILDOING

The final sign in this passage is expressed in two short clauses: the first refers to all signs of guidance, pointers to faith and state-

ments of the truth that have been given so far in this section: *And, thus, We explain Our signs distinctly.* The second clause in this short sign fills us with wonder: *So that the way is indicated for the ones who sin.* (6:55)

This statement tells us that the Quranic approach endeavors to clarify the truth and states it very plainly, but its purpose is not merely to make the path of the believers clearly distinct. It also endeavors to clearly and plainly portray falsehood so that the path of the evildoers is also clearly distinct. Clarity of the one necessitates clarity of the other.

This approach of the Quran has been chosen by God as it is most effective with the human mind. God knows that believing in the truth requires knowledge of falsehood and adding total certainty to faith requires a clear-cut distinction between falsehood and evil on the one hand and truth and goodness on the other. The momentum a believer requires in his advocacy of the truth is not merely generated by his feeling that he follows the truth. The extra power is given by realizing that opposition to his efforts comes from falsehood, advocated by the evildoers, who have always been the ones to oppose prophets. As God states in another sign: *And, thus, We assigned for every Prophet an enemy of the ones who sin.* (25:31) Thus, the Prophet Muhammad and the believers know for certain that those opposing them are none other than evildoers.

It is an important objective of the Quranic approach we listen carefully to the Quran where that evil and falsehood are very clearly identified, so that the truth and goodness become clear and distinct. Confusion about the first may lead to confusion about the second because the two move along paths that cannot meet. Therefore, every Quranic movement should begin with a clear identification of the methods and features of the believers, as well as those of the evildoers. This identification should be based on what we see in the real world, not confined to theories and an abstract world.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
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3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

And drive not away those who call to their Lord in the morning and the evening, wanting His Countenance ... (6:52) the Quranic message tells us. Who is one who drives them away? Those who drive them away are the unjust. It is unjust to drive away anyone who calls on his or her Lord in the morning or evening wanting His Countenance, His Presence. This behavior is the sign of a believer no matter what his social status may be. Their reckoning is not on us and our reckoning is not on them. Therefore, a believer knows the answer to the Quranic question: *Is not God greater in knowledge of the ones who are thankful?* (6:53)

PRACTICE QUESTIONS FOR LISTENING CRITICALLY ARE:

I'm not sure I understand you when you say ...,
Could you explain that further?
Could you give me an example or illustration of this?
Would you also say ...?
Let me see if I understand you. What you are saying is ....
Is that right?
How do you respond to this objection?

Critical listeners ask questions as they listen in order to better understand what the speaker is saying. Listening critically means constructing an accurate interpretation of, understanding the elements of thought in, and evaluating, the reasoning of an oral communication. Reading critically means constructing an accurate interpretation of the sacred text, understanding the elements of thought in it, and evaluating, the reasoning of it.

LESSON 55(7). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
RAISING QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, ISSUES

Critical thinkers constantly ask themselves questions. Take the example of al-Ghazzali who writes in *Deliverance from Error:*

> So I began by saying to myself: What I seek is knowledge of the true meaning of things. Of necessity, therefore, I must inquire into just what the true meaning of knowledge is.
>
> Then it became clear to me that sure and certain knowledge is that in which the thing known is made so manifest that no doubt clings to it, nor is it accompanied by the possibility of error and deception, nor can the mind even suppose such a possibility. Furthermore, safety from error must accompany the certainty to such a degree that, if someone proposed to show it to be false—for example, a man who would turn a stone into gold and a stick into a snake — his feat would not induce any doubt or denial. For if I know that ten is more than three, and then someone were to say: No, on the contrary, three is more than ten, as is proved by my turning this stick into a snake—and if he were to do just that and I were to see him do it, I would not doubt my knowledge because of his fear. The only effect it would have on me would be to make me wonder how he could do such a thing. But there would be no doubt at all about what I knew!
>
> I realized, then, that whatever I did not know in this way and was not certain of with this kind of certainty was unreliable and unsure knowledge, and that every knowledge unaccompanied by safety from error is not sure and certain knowledge.
>
> I then scrutinized all my cognitions and found myself devoid of any knowledge answering the previous description except in the case of sense-data and the self- evident truths. So I said: Now that despair has befallen me, the only hope I have of acquiring an insight into obscure matters is to start from things that are perfectly clear, namely sense-data and the self-evident truths. Hence I must first study these thoroughly in order to reach a sure answer to these questions: Is my reliance on sense-data and my safety from error in the case of self-evident truths of the same kind as that which I formerly had regarding the dicta of authority, and of the same kind as that which most men have regarding speculative matters? Or is it a verifiable safety containing no deception or danger?
>
> With great earnestness, therefore, I began to reflect on my sense-data to see if I could make myself doubt them. This protracted effort to induce doubt finally brought me to the point where my soul would

not allow me to admit safety from error even in the case of my sense-data. Rather it began to be open to doubt about them and to say: Whence comes your reliance on sense-data? The strongest of the senses is the sense of sight. Now this looks at a shadow and sees it standing still and motionless and judges that motion must be denied. Then, due to experience and observation, an hour later it knows that the shadow is moving, and that it did not move in a sudden spurt, but so gradually and imperceptibly that it was never completely at rest. Sight also looks at a star and sees it as something small, the size of a dinar: then geometrical proofs demonstrate that it surpasses the earth in size. In the case of this and of similar instances of sense-data the sense-judge makes its judgments, but the reason-judge refutes it and repeatedly gives it the lie in an incontrovertible fashion.[15]

QURANIC CHAPTER 6: THE FLOCKS (AL-ANAM)
SIGNS 6:56-6:60

Makkah: *Say: I was prohibited that I worship those whom*
you call to other than God.
Say: I will not follow your desires,
for, then, I would have gone astray.
I would not be of the ones who are truly guided. (6:56)
Say: I am with a clear portent from my Lord
and you denied it.
I have not of that which you seek to hasten.
The determination is with God.
He relates The Truth.
And He is Best of the ones who
distinguish truth from falsehood. (6:57)
Say: Truly, if with me was what you seek to hasten,
the command would be decided between me and between you.
And God is greater in knowledge
of the ones who are unjust. (6:58)
With Him are the keys of the unseen.
None knows them but He.
And He knows whatever is on dry land and in the sea.
Not a leaf descends but He knows it,
nor a grain in the shadows of the earth,
nor fresh nor dry thing, but it is in a clear Book. (6:59)
It is He Who gathers you to Himself by nighttime
and He knows what you were busy with by daytime.
Again, He raises you up in it so that the term,
that which is determined, is decided.

Again, to Him is your return.
Again, He will tell you of what you had been doing. (6:60)

COMMENTARY°

It is clear in the Prophet's heart that he has clear evidence given him by God. He is absolutely certain of this evidence, and his firm belief will not admit any doubts as a result of the attitude of the ungrateful who deny his message. Therefore, he devotes himself to his faith, and takes his stand away from his people. His certainty that they are in deep error is as strong as his certainty of the truth that he is rightly guided: (6:56-6:57)

The nature of God manifests itself in God's forbearance when He does not act on the ungrateful' requests for a physical miracle. Should He give them such a miracle and should they continue to disbelieve, their continued rejection of the truth would ensure their total destruction. Had the Prophet been able to grant them what they hastily demanded, he would have done so. As a human being, he would have been fed up with their stubborn rejection. To allow them an indefinite chance is an aspect of God's grace, one which reflects His God: *Say: Truly, if with me was what you seek to hasten, the command would be decided between me and between you. And God is greater in knowledge of the ones who are unjust.* (6:58)

Again, the nature of God is clearly reflected in God's knowledge that encompasses everything that takes place throughout the universe. This is described in a way that cannot apply to anyone other than God, and cannot be painted by anyone but Him: *With Him are the keys of the unseen. None knows them but He. And He knows whatever is on dry land and in the sea. Not a leaf descends but He knows it, nor a grain in the shadows of the earth, nor fresh nor dry thing, but it is in a clear Book.* (6:59)

Whatever good or evil we do, and whatever our hands take or leave, is known to God. None of our movements is left out: *It is He Who gathers you to Himself by nighttime and He knows what you were busy with by daytime. Again, He raises you up in it so that the term, that which is determined, is decided. Again, to Him is your return. Again, He will tell you of what you had been doing.* (6:60)

BEYOND OUR PERCEPTION

We need now to say a word about the first clause in this sign, which states: *With Him are the keys of the unseen. None knows them but He.* (6:59)

It is important to define what we describe in English as lying

"beyond the reach of human perception" and the keys to it as being known only to God. This expression is given in the Arabic text in one word, *ghayb*, which is an essential element of the Quranic message, existence and life. The term is derived in Arabic from a root which denotes "absence, disappearance, hiding, shielding from people's senses and understanding".

We need to speak about *ghayb* because it is frequently contrasted nowadays with 'science' and what is 'scientific'. The Quran states that there is something to describe as *ghayb* which lies beyond the reach of human perception, and that the keys to this world are known only to God. The Quran also states that the knowledge we have been given is scanty, but sufficient for us and appropriate for our potential. Beyond the factual knowledge given them by God, people only indulge in guesswork, which is no substitute for the truth. God states that He has set into operation certain laws for this universe, and He has taught us how to understand some of these laws and deal with them according to our ability. He further states that He will reveal to us of these laws what strengthens our faith. This does not violate the unchangeable laws of nature or affect the world that remains beyond the reach of human perception. Nor does it affect God's absolute will or the fact that everything occurs in accordance with His will. We will now touch briefly on these facts.

To believe in God is to believe in what lies beyond the reach of human perception. It is not possible for human beings to comprehend the nature of God. When they believe in Him, they recognize the results of His actions, but they cannot conceive His nature or what He works. Similarly, the life to come also lies beyond the reach of human perception. Everything that relates to the Day of Judgment: the reckoning, the reward, and the punishment—all belong to the world beyond. We believe in all these because God has told us about them.

The *ghayb* which we are required to accept in order to have true faith includes other facts mentioned in the Quran as God describes the believers and their faith: *The Messenger believed in what was caused to descend to him from his Lord as do the ones who believe. All believed in God and His angels and His Books and His Messengers saying: We separate and divide not among anyone of His Messengers. And they said: We heard and we obeyed, so grant **Your** forgiveness, Our Lord! And to **You** is the Homecoming.* (2:285) Every believer, then, must also believe in what God has revealed to His Messenger which includes some knowledge of the *ghayb* which God imparts to His Messenger, in a measure He determines, as explained in another Quranic sign: *He is The One Who Knows of the unseen! And He discloses not the unseen to anyone.* (72:26-72:27)

Believing in the angels is also part of believing in the imperceptible, because we only know about angels what God has chosen to tell us. In addition, we have to believe in God's will and its operation. That is also part of *ghayb*.

We are, however, surrounded by imperceptibles in every direction. Part of this relates to time: past, present and future. Another part exists within us ourselves, and more is available in the universe. What do we know about the origin of this universe, its existence, nature and motion? What do we know about life and its cycles? All this lies beyond his perception. Indeed, we do not know what occurs within us at the present moment, let alone what occurs during the next moment or in the universe with its atoms and electrons, etc.

The human intellect floats in an ocean of the unknown, stopping every now and then at little islands which, to us, represent the landmarks of our world. Without God's grace and His will to make this world subservient to us and to teach us a number of the rules of nature, we would not have been able to do anything. But we remains ungrateful to God: *But few of My servants are grateful.* (34:13) Indeed, some of us these days boast of the scanty knowledge God has given us and the laws of nature He has shown them to claim that "we stand alone" and that we are in no need of God. Sometimes, our boasting suggests that science is the opposite of the imperceptible and that scientific thinking contrasts with imperceptibility. The two, as he claims, are opposite extremes.

We arrive at our conclusions through experiment and analogy. We begin with a limited experiment and then generalize our conclusions by comparison, all of which can only lead a scientist to admit a probability, not a certainty. One way of arriving at a certainty is to apply the result of a particular experiment to everything with the same nature, occurring at any time and under any conditions. This is not available to us. The only way to arrive at a certainty and absolute truism is through divine guidance. What this boils down to is that we have the certainties that God has chosen to give us through His messengers. Beyond these, human knowledge remains within the range of what is probable, not what is certain.

Ghayb exists all around us, beyond the realm of our knowledge which continues to be based on probabilities. We look at the universe around us and continue to work out hypotheses and theories about its origin, nature and movement, and about time and place, their interrelationship with each other and with what takes place in the universe. We also try to think about life: its source, origin, nature, continuity, the factors and forces that influence it and how it relates to material existence. We also thinks about our self: how are we dif-

ferent from matter and what distinguishes us from other living things? How did we come to exist on this earth; and how do we behave? What is human intellect, and what are its distinctive features? What happens to him after death? Even if we take the human body: what occurs inside it of chemical interactions at every moment and how do such interactions happen?

Before we conclude we need to say a few words on the nature of *ghayb* as understood in the Quranic context.

The Quran states very clearly that there is a world beyond the reach of human perception and another world that can be perceived. Not everything around us is *ghayb*, and not all forces of the universe are unknown. There are certain laws that operate in the universe without fail. We can know some of these in as much as this knowledge can be tolerated or is needed by us to fulfil his role on earth.

God has given us the power to know this much of the laws of the universe and to manipulate these forces in accordance with these laws. We will then be able to accomplish our mission and make use of the potentials of the earth and promote life.

Side by side with these constant laws, God's will operates free of all restrictions. It is God's will that sets these laws in operation every time they operate. Theirs is not a purely automatic motion. Although they operate in accordance with the rules God has set for them, it is God's will that operates them. That will is part of *ghayb*, which is not known to anyone with any degree of certainty. The maximum that people can know of it remains within the range of assumptions and probabilities. Science readily admits this.

There is only one certainty, which is that of the world that lies beyond the reach of human perception. Everything else belongs to the world of probabilities. There is also one inevitability, which is that God's will shall come to pass. His will is part of the *ghayb* known only to Him. Nevertheless, there are constant laws of nature which we may study and recognize, and even utilize for our benefit. At the same time, the door remains open for God's will to operate as He chooses. This is the absolute certainty. *Truly, this, the Quran, guides to what is upright.* (17:9)

Having emphasized that God's knowledge includes everything in the universe, the section cites one aspect of this absolute knowledge which relates to us, and another aspect which asserts God's absolute power over everything in the universe: *It is He Who gathers you to Himself by nighttime and He knows what you were busy with by daytime. Again, He raises you up in it so that the term, that which is determined, is decided. Again, to Him is your return. Again, He will tell you of what you had been doing.* (6:60) In a few simple

words, this sign explains that all human life is in God's hands, within His knowledge and subject to His will. This includes people's sleep and awakening, death and resurrection, reckoning and judgment. The description follows the inimitable method of the Quran in portraying everything vividly, alive. Thus it is able to touch people's hearts with every image drawn and every movement described.

It is He Who gathers you to Himself by nighttime. (6: 60) It is then a form of death that occurs to people when they are overtaken by sleep. Their senses do not operate, their minds stop functioning and their consciousness stops. Human beings cannot yet discover the secret of what happens to them when they sleep, although they know its effects. This is, then, one of the numerous forms of ghayb that engulfs human life. As they sleep, human beings lose all their power, including their consciousness. They are in God's hands, as they are certainly all the time. He alone can bring them back to life. How weak we are in comparison to Him.

He knows what you were busy with by daytime (6:60) Whatever good or evil we do, and whatever our hands take or leave, is known to God. None of our movements is left out.

Again, He raises you up in it so that the term, that which is determined, is decided. (6:60) It is He who awakens you in the day from your slumber so that you complete the term He has appointed for each one of you. This covers the status of human beings within the range set by God. His will is inescapable.

Again, to Him is your return. (6:60) You return to Him just like sheep coming back to their shepherd at the end of the day. *Again, He will tell you of what you had been doing.* (6:60) This is when the record that includes everything is laid open. Absolute justice is then administered to all.

Although this is a short sign composed of a few words, it nonetheless includes a long sequence of scenes and images, statements of fact and wide-ranging connotations. Who other than God can produce such a style? What is miraculous if this is not a miracle? Yet those who reject the faith choose not to see it in its true color. They demand instead a physical miracle despite the fact that this would inevitably be followed by God's punishment, should they continue to reject Him afterwards.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary**

(concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message here contains three "say" verses, messages the Prophet is specifically told to relate regarding faith. What are the three? To worship other than God is to go astray; to follow the desires of another is to go astray; God has sent the Prophet with a clear sign by which He distinguishes truth from falsehood that the ungrateful deny. If the command that the ungrateful wish to hasten to come were to arrive, the command of God would already have been decided. "Say" verses are an important concept in the Quran as a means of Quranic commands—imperatives—to be followed. Knowing the Quran as the first source for information about the Prophet is essential. This will give us a "new view" into his life.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I loved learning how to ask questions.
I was able to ask questions in class.
I incorporated questions into my papers.
I realized that 1/6th of the Quran are questions.
I hope to study them and learn more about them over time.

LESSON 55(8). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
PRACTICING DISCUSSION: CLARIFYING AND QUESTIONING INTERPRETATIONS

Critical thinkers are questioners. The ability to question and probe deeply, to get down to root ideas, to get beneath the mere appearance of things, is at the very heart of this strategy. Furthermore, critical thinkers are comfortable being questioned. They actually welcome questions. They don't become offended, confused, or intimidated. They welcome good questions as an opportunity to develop a line of thought.

There are many different kinds of questions and moves available to you. Your teacher can use questioning techniques to learn what you and your classmates think, helping you develop your ideas, or as a prelude to evaluation. When confronted with a new idea, you want to understand it, to relate it to your experience, and to determine its implications, consequences, and value. You can fruitfully uncover the structure of your own and others' perspectives. Probing questions are the tools by which these goals are reached.

Quranic critical thinkers are never without questions to ask as the Quranic continuously ask. It is through exploring questions that the sacred text is able to clarify interpretations. Through their questioning, students explore the basic ideas. Going beyond what things appear to be, they not only study Quranic questions, but are able to ask many more themselves.

QURANIC CHAPTER 6: THE FLOCKS (AL-ANAM)
SIGNS 6:61-6:70

Makkah: *And He is The One Who Is Omniscient*
over His servants.
And He sends over you recorders
until when death drew near one of you.
Our messengers gathered him to themselves
and they neglect not. (6:61)
Again, they would be returned to God,
their Defender, The True.
Is not the determination for Him?
And He is The Swiftest of the ones who reckon. (6:62)
Say: Who delivers you from the shadows
of the dry land and the sea?
You call to Him humbly and inwardly:
*If **You** were to rescue us from this,*
we will be of the ones who are thankful. (6:63)
Say: God delivers you from them and from every distress.
And, again, you ascribe partners with Him. (6:64)
Say: He is The One Who Has Power to raise up on you

a punishment from above you, or from beneath your feet
or to confuse you as partisans
and to cause you to experience the violence
of some of you to one another.
Look on how We diversify the signs
so that perhaps they will understand! (6:65)
*And **your** folk denied it and it is The Truth.*
Say: I am not a trustee over you. (6:66)
For every tiding there is an appointed time.
And you will know it. (6:67)
*And when **you** had seen those who engage in idle talk*
about Our signs, then, turn aside from them
until they discuss in conversation other than that.
*And if Satan should cause **you** to forget,*
then, after a reminder, sit not with the folk,
the ones who are unjust. (6:68)
There is not on those who are God-conscious
anything of their reckoning,
but a reminder so that perhaps they will be God-conscious. (6:69)
Forsake those who took to themselves their way of life
as a pastime and as a diversion
and whom this present life deluded.
But remind with it, the Quran, so that a soul would not be given up
to destruction for what it earned.
Other than God there is not for it a protector nor an intercessor.
Even if it be an equitable equivalent, it will not be taken from it.
Those are those who were given up to destruction for what they earned.
For them is a drink of scalding water and a painful punishment
because they had been ungrateful. (6:70)

COMMENTARY°

An important feature of God is that which combines absolute power over all creation and a constant, alert watch. That which combines the predetermination of the life span of every individual, and our inescapable destiny with the final reckoning which is both prompt and unfailing. All this belongs to the realm of those imperceptibles which encompass human life. (6:61-6:62)

This is all portrayed in a short, fast, clear scene, producing a profound effect. They are reminded that great distress is not limited to the Day of Resurrection when they have to face their reckoning. They, indeed, go through periods of great distress in the deep darkness of land and sea. At such moments, they turn only to God, rec-

ognizing that only He can save them. Still they revert to their erring ways in periods of ease: (6:63-6:64) At times, it is sufficient to visualize danger and remember distress to soften people's hearts and help them restrain their wild desires. People can then remember their feelings of weakness as they remember God's grace when He alleviates their distress. *If You were to rescue us from this, we will be of the ones who are thankful.* (6:63)

God commands His Messenger to remind them of the truth: *Say: God delivers you from them and from every distress.* (6:64) There is no one to respond to them other than He, and no one else to remove their distress. But the Prophet is also commanded to remind them of their singularly strange attitude: *And, again, you ascribe partners with Him.* (6: 64)

The section reminds them of God's power which could smite them after they have been saved. It is not like a momentary distress which is not replaced once it is over. They are reminded of God's unlimited ability to bring about suffering that they cannot endure: (6:65)

Your people have rejected the Quran. *And your folk denied it and it is The Truth. Say: I am not a trustee over you.* (6:66)

God then instructs His Messenger to dissociate himself from his people, making his attitude clear to them. He is also to inform them that he has no say over their fate. Neither is he responsible for their behavior, nor can he guide their hearts. That is not up to him. Once he has conveyed to them his message, he has discharged his duty and he has to leave them to their inevitable destiny: *For every tiding there is an appointed time. And you will know it.* (6:67)

If he were to do otherwise, his action could be construed as an implicit acceptance of what they do. Alternatively, it may be taken as a carelessness with the faith, when a Muslim should place his religion at the top of what he cherishes. Should he forget all this and sit with them, he must immediately upon remembering the correct approach rise up and leave their company: (6:68-6:69)

The section continues to reiterate the complete distinction between the two communities, outlining the limits within which dealings and interactions may be conducted. *And even if it be an equitable equivalent, it will not be taken from it. Those are those who were given up to destruction for what they earned. For them is a drink of scalding water and a painful punishment because they had been ungrateful.*(6:70)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)?**
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

What does the Quranic message say we should do with those who take their way of life (din, religion) as a pastime and as a diversion and whom this present life deluded? *Forsake those who took to themselves their way of life as a pastime and as a diversion and whom this present life deluded. But remind with it, the Quran, so that a soul would not be given up to destruction for what it earned. Other than God there is not for it a protector nor an intercessor. And even if it be an equitable equivalent, it will not be taken from it. Those are those who were given up to destruction for what they earned. For them is a drink of scalding water and a painful punishment because they had been ungrateful.* (6:70)

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

Discover a multiple of ways to ask questions that explore the logic of what we are reading, hearing or thinking.
Explore and question assumptions, judgments, inferences, what may appear to be contradictory or inconsistent.
Question the relevance of what we are studying.
Probe the evidence for and against what others say.
Question myself and others.

Lesson 55(9). Critical Thinking Strategy
Reasoning Dialectically: Comparing Interpretations

Dialogical thinking refers to thinking that involves a dialogue or extended exchange between different points of view. Whenever we consider concepts or issues deeply, we naturally explore their connections to other ideas and issues within different domains or points of view. Critical thinkers need to be able to engage in fruitful, exploratory dialogue, proposing ideas, probing their roots, considering subject matter insights and evidence, testing ideas, and moving between various points of view. When we think, we often engage in dialogue, either inwardly or aloud with others. We need to integrate critical thinking skills into that dialogue so that it is as fruitful as possible. Questioning is one form of dialogical thinking.

Reasoning dialogically means using a thinking that involves a dialogue between different points of view as the Quranic example shows. Deeply explore the connections to the ideas expressed in these Quranic signs. You should be guided to first engaging in an exploratory dialogue where you study the ideas, explore the roots of these ideas, consider the evidence of the subject matter testing the ideas as you move between multiple points of view. You should engage in an inward dialogue with yourself or an outward one with others. You need to learn how to integrate the Quranic critical thinking skills with your dialogue.

Quranic Chapter 6: The Flocks (al-Anam)
Signs 6:71-6:82

Makkah: *Say: Will we call to other than God*
what can neither hurt nor profit us?
And are we to be repelled on our heels
after God guided us like one whom the satans
lured, bewildered in and on the earth
although he has companions who call him to the guidance saying:
Approach us? Say: Truly, the guidance of God is The Guidance.
And we were commanded to submit to the Lord of the worlds (6:71)
and to perform the formal prayer
and be God-conscious of Him.
And it is He to Whom you will be assembled.(6:72)
And it is He Who created the heavens and the earth with The Truth.
And on a Day He says: Be! Then, it is!
His saying is The Truth.
And His is the dominion on a Day when the trumpet will be blown.

He is One Who Knows of the unseen and the visible.
And He is The Wise, The Aware.(6:73)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (6:74)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (6:75)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (6:76)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (6:77)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (6:78)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (6:79)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (6:80)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (6:81)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (6:82)

COMMENTARY°

We have a strong denunciation of this absurdity which no human intellect can accept once it is freed of inherited traditions and prevailing values and is allowed to judge objectively for itself. To emphasize the association of partners with God and to strengthen its denunciation, the section portrays these beliefs in contrast to the concept of God's Oneness and submission to Him alone. It is to this concept that He has guided the believers: *Say: Will we call to other than God what can neither hurt nor profit us?* (6:71)

To revert to idolatry is, then, a turning back on one's heels in a retrogressive movement after one has achieved considerable progress. This is followed by a vividly realistic and inspiring scene: *And are we to be repelled on our heels after God guided us like one whom the satans lured, bewildered in and on the earth although he has companions who call him to the guidance saying: Approach us?* (6:71)

The scene is full of life. It describes the loss and bewilderment that inevitably overwhelms any person who reverts to idolatry after having believed in God's Oneness. He finds himself torn between believing in the Supreme Lord who has no partners, and numerous deities who are powerless. He is confused, unable to determine where to turn for guidance. He is lost, bewildered. How miserable is his lot for being lured away, perplexed and for committing blunders. The word 'lure' is highly descriptive. The person we see in this scene does not follow the direction into which he is lured in order to establish a well-defined objective, even though it leads to error.

He has, on the other side, friends and companions who have followed proper guidance, and who beckon him to come over to them. Between the lure of the devils and the beckoning of his guided companions this person continues to blunder along, unable to determine

where to go and which side to join. His psychological suffering looms large, so much so that we actually feel it as it is described.

The scene is followed by a clear statement outlining the right way which all people should follow: *Say: Truly, the guidance of God is The Guidance. And we were commanded to submit to the Lord of the worlds and to perform the formal prayer and be God-conscious of Him. And it is He to Whom you will be assembled.* (6:71-6:72)

This decisive statement fits perfectly with the psychological situation described here. When someone fully appreciates the type of bewilderment the Quranic sign describes and the suffering of anyone who so experiences such bewilderment, he is ready to receive with reassurance such a decisive statement and accept it without hesitation. *Say: Truly, the guidance of God is The Guidance.* (6:71) This is an absolute certainty.

Guidance followed by complete submission God has given us the ability to recognize and appreciate some of the laws of nature, its forces and potentials so that we may be able to use these in discharging the task assigned to us of building the earth and promoting human life and civilization. But we have not been granted by God the ability to get to the core of the absolute truths of the universe or to fathom the world which lies beyond the reach of his perceptions. This world includes the workings of our own mind sand soul, and even the workings of our own organs and the causes which enable our body to function properly, according to a definite system and a particular fashion. Hence, we are in need of divine guidance concerning everything that relates to our own nature, including faith, morals, values and standards, systems and laws. Only with such guidance can we regulate our life as it should be regulated.

Whenever we adopt God's guidance, we find ourselves following the right track, because *"God's guidance is the only guidance"*. Whenever we abandon God's guidance completely or deviates from it partially in order to replace it with something else, we lose our way. This is due to the fact that whatever is in conflict with God's guidance represents error and loss. There is simply no third cause: *And what else is there after The Truth but wandering astray?* (10:32)

Humanity continues to endure the terrible effects of going astray, for these are inevitable when mankind moves away from God's guidance. Indeed, this is the one historical inevitability which is certain to take place because, unlike those inevitabilities claimed by the advocates of different philosophies, this one is determined by God.

Anyone who wishes to look closely at the misery to which people expose themselves when they deviate from God's guidance does not need to look far. That misery is everywhere for us to see. Those

who are endowed with insight and intelligence continue to raise their voices to warn against it. The Quranic sign states clearly that human beings must submit themselves to God alone, offer worship to Him and continue to fear Him alone: *And we were commanded to submit to the Lord of the worlds and to perform the formal prayer and be God-conscious of Him. And it is He to Whom you will be assembled.* (6:71-6:72)

The instructions given to the Prophet Muhammad are such that he has to declare in absolute clarity that God's guidance is the only guidance. As such, we are commanded to submit to the *Lord of all the worlds*, because to Him alone all the worlds submit. Why should we be the only exception out of all creation when everything in the universe submits to God's absolute Lordship?

The reference made here to the fact that God is *the Lord of all the worlds* comes at the right time. It emphasizes an undeniable fact that all the worlds, whether known or unknown to us, submit to the laws God has set in operation and cannot break away from them. Biologically, man is also subject to the laws of nature. What we need to do, then, is to submit also in the area in which we have been given a choice: to follow guidance or to sink in error. When we choose to submit to God in the same way as we do biologically, all our affairs will be set aright, because harmony will be established between our constitution and our actions, between our body and our soul, between our present life and our life to come.

The most essential thing, then, is complete submission to God and the acknowledgement of His Lordship over the universe. The offering of worship and the molding of conscious attitudes follow from this, because these cannot be done properly unless they are based on the solid foundation of our submission to God. The final note in this passage brings together a number of essential components of the concept of faith, namely, resurrection, creation, wisdom and awareness of all that takes place in the universe. All these are attributes so that our concept of God is properly formulated: *And it is He Who created the heavens and the earth with The Truth. And on a Day He says: Be! Then, it is! His saying is The Truth. And His is the dominion on a Day when the trumpet will be blown. He is One Who Knows of the unseen and the visible. And He is The Wise, The Aware.*(6:73) This fact applies to God's word, "*Be*", which causes creation.

This His commandment that all creation should submit to Him alone, this His word providing legislation for mankind to implement, and this His word which tells us about the past, present and future, the origin of creation, resurrection, reckoning and reward. In all this, His word is the truth. Hence, those who associate with Him partners

that can cause no benefit or harm, those who follow the bidding of anyone other than Him, or who adopt any philosophy other than that of the divine faith, or who implement any legislation other than His code are advised to surrender themselves to Him alone. *And His is the dominion on a Day when the trumpet will be blown.* (6:73)

On the Day of Resurrection, the trumpet is sounded in a way that no human being has thus far heard. It is part of what God has kept to Himself. The nature of that trumpet and how people respond to it remain unknown to anyone other than God. The reports available to us suggest that it is a horn-like trumpet, made of light. It is blown by an angel. As the dead in their graves hear it, they immediately rise up. Indeed, this is the second blow given on that trumpet. The first one causes all creatures in the heavens and on earth to be stunned, with the exception of those God chooses to exempt.

On that day when the trumpet is sounded, even the rejecters and the blind will begin to see and realize that all sovereignty belongs to God alone. No one has any power other than Him. No will can operate other than His. Hence, those who in this life refuse to submit to Him willingly are well advised to change their attitude before they have to submit to His absolute power on the day when the trumpet is blown. *He is One Who Knows of the unseen and the visible.* (6:73)

His knowledge is perfect, absolute. It includes everything that is kept away from us as well as that which we see in the universe. Nothing of people's affairs and no part of their lives can be hidden from Him. Again, they will follow good counsel if they surrender themselves to Him, worship Him and be God-conscious. This fact is mentioned here for its own sake and is used as something with which to influence those who reject the faith.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions,** (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret**

the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quran tells us here in an exchange of the believers to the ungrateful: *Say: Will we call to other than God what can neither hurt nor profit us? And are we to be repelled on our heels after God guided us like one whom the satans lured, bewildered in and on the earth although he has companions who call him to the guidance saying: Approach us? Say: Truly, the guidance of God is The Guidance. And we were commanded to submit to the Lord of the worlds* (6:71) *and to perform the formal prayer and be God-conscious of Him. And it is He to Whom you will be assembled.* (6:72)

Analyze this sign based on the Quranic Critial Thinking criteria.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I understood Quranic dialectical reasoning after studying these verses.
I understood that the guidance of God is The Guidance.

QURANIC CHAPTER 6: THE FLOCKS (AL-ANAM)
SIGNS 6:83-6:90

Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (6:83)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph; Book 25: Noah; Book 28: David, Solomon, Job; Book 27: Moses, Aaron (6:84)
Makkah: Book 28: Zechariah, Yahya, Jesus, Elias (6:85)
Makkah: Book 26: Ishmael, Lot; Book 25: Elisha; Book 28: Jonah; (6:86)
Makkah: Book 24: Prophets (6:87)
Makkah: Book 24: Prophets (6:88)
Makkah: Book 24: Prophets (6:89)
Makkah: Book 24: Prophets (6:90)

LESSON 55(10). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
REASONING DIALECTICALLY: EVALUATING INTERPRETATIONS

Dialectical thinking refers to dialogical thinking conducted in order to test the strengths and weaknesses of opposing points of view. Court trials and debates are dialectical in intention. They pit idea against idea, reasoning against counter-reasoning in order to get at the truth of a matter. As soon as we begin to explore ideas, we find that some clash or are inconsistent with others. If we are to integrate our thinking, we need to assess which of the conflicting ideas we will provisionally accept and which we shall provisionally reject, or which parts of the views are strong and which weak, or how the views can be reconciled. You need to develop dialectical reasoning skills, so that your thinking not only moves comfortably between divergent points of view or lines of thought, but also makes some assessments in light of the relative strengths and weaknesses of the evidence or reasoning presented. Therefore, when thinking dialectically, critical thinkers can use critical affective strategies appropriately.

QURANIC CHAPTER 6: THE FLOCKS (AL-ANAM)
SIGNS 6:91-6:94

Madinah (6:91)
Makkah: *And this is a Book*
We caused to descend
—that which is blessed—and that which establishes as true
what was before it and for you to warn the Mother of Towns
and who are around it and those who believe in the world to come
believe in it.
And they over their formal prayers are watchful. (6:92)
Madinah (6:93)
And, certainly, you drew near Us one by one
as We created you the first time.
And you left what We granted you behind your backs.
We see not your intercessors with you,
those whom you claimed as your ascribed associates.
Certainly, the bonds between you were cut asunder.
And gone astray from you is what you had been claiming. (6:94)

COMMENTARY°

There is a strong rebuke by God Himself (6:92) about whom they asserted their fabrications. They stand in front of Him in a position of total misery: *And, certainly, you drew near Us one by one as We created you the first time.* (6:94) You have nothing except your own selves, and you come as individuals, each one for himself. That

is how you face your Lord, just as He created you: each is born alone, naked, helpless. You have left behind everything you have had; everybody else has deserted you; you have no power or authority over anything God had given to you: *And you left what We granted you behind your backs.* (6:94) All your wealth, children, prestige, position and power you have left behind because you could not bring them with you, even if you had so wished. *We see not your intercessors with you, those whom you claimed as your ascribed associates.* (6:94) You used to claim that those beings would intercede on your behalf anytime you go through a hardship. You used to assign to them a portion of your lives and a share of your wealth, claiming that they would intercede for you with God. This is similar to their claim in defense of their idolatrous practices, when they said: These assumed intercessors may take different shapes and forms. They may be human, such as priests and people of power and authority, or they may be statues of stone, idols, jinn, angels, planets or indeed any being, which symbolized their gods.

Now that they have come to their Lord individually, each on his or her own, they are asked where have those partners and intercessors gone? The answer is given in the Quranic sign in these terms: *Certainly, the bonds between you were cut asunder.* (6:94) Every link, and every tie has been broken. There is no longer anything to group them together in any way or form. *And gone astray from you is what you had been claiming.* (6:94) They used to make all sorts of assertions, including what they maintained about those beings whom they claimed to be partners with God or whom they alleged to be able to intercede with God. All these claims are now proven false. All trust they had put in anyone or anything has failed them. They are totally powerless. This scene violently shakes the human heart as it holds out a vivid and awesome image, imparting its overtones to us so that we are able to contemplate its powerful message. This is just one example of the inimitable style of the Quran.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

What are the strengths of the believers' arguments and the weaknesses of

the arguments of the ungrateful in these Quranic signs? What information are we given to interpret? Who are the intercessors: What had the ungrateful assumed: What are the consequences of their assumptions?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I looked up each Quranic verse that was an example of dialectical reasoning above and understood:

If you are in doubt, ... then
Do they say ... ? Rather
Bring forward your witnesses
Bring your proof
Have they not considered?
Let the human being consider ...
Clear proof...

LESSON 55(11). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
DEEP QUESTIONING

When reading a sign (verse, *ayah*), critical thinkers look for the issues that underlie the claims that are expressed. They come to their own understanding of the details. They then place this in a larger context. They move between the basic underlying issues and the larger picture of the issue at hand. They remain focused on the issue as they follow a line of thought. They organize the issues in their own way as they continue to raise questions about the issue as they increase their knowledge.

QURANIC CHAPTER 6: THE FLOCKS (AL-ANAM)
SIGNS 6:95-6:100

Makkah: *Truly, it is God who is One Who Causes to Break Forth*
the grain and the pit of a date.
He brings out the living from the dead
and is One Who Brings Out the dead from the living.
That is God.
Then, how you are mislead. (6:95)
He is One Who Causes to Break Forth the morning dawn
and He made the night as a place of comfort and rest
and the sun and the moon to keep count.
That is the foreordaining of The Almighty, The Knowing. (6:96)
And it is He Who made the stars for you
so that you will be truly guided by them
in the shadows of dry land and the sea.
Surely, We explained distinctly the signs
for a folk who know. (6:97)
And it is He Who caused you to grow from a single soul,
then, a temporary stay and a repository.
Surely, We explained distinctly
the signs for a folk who understand. (6:98)
And it is He Who caused to descend water from heaven.
Then, We brought out from it every kind of bringing forth.
Then, We brought out herbs from it.
We bring out from it thick-clustered grain
and from the date palm tree, from the spathe of it,
thick clusters of dates,
that which draws near and gardens of the grapevines
and the olives and the pomegranates, like each to each
and not resembling one another.
Look on its fruit when it bore fruit and its ripening.
Truly, in this are signs for a folk who believe. (6:99)

And they made as associates with God—the jinn—
although He created them.
And they invented for Him sons and daughters
without knowledge. Glory be to Him!
Exalted is He above what they allege. (6:100)

COMMENTARY°

THE RHYTHM OF THE SIGNS

Most of all we need to remember how its waves follow close on the heels of each other in an endless flow, and how its scenes are portrayed in a breathtaking splendor, coupled with a superbly inspiring rhythm.

This section tackles its subject matter in a unique way. At every turn, in every situation or scene, it brings out in sharp relief all the awesome splendor of what is being portrayed, keeping us spellbound, breathless. We follow its scenes and changing, powerful rhythm.

In its quick flow of scenes, inspirations, rhythms, images and shades, it resembles a fast, wide river flowing with white water. As one wave reaches its breaking place, the next one follows very closely, almost reaching out to the one that has just gone by. The flow remains continuous, unending.

In every one of these flowing and closely successive waves, the same rich splendor is there to see. And in all the scenes portrayed, we have superb harmony. Thus, we are absolutely enchanted; first by the splendid scenes, then their lively images, the powerful music, the inimitable expression, the flood of inspiring figures of speech. The section addresses our heart and mind from every angle and in every way possible.

All these features are seen at their clearest in this passage. The reader feels as though the scenes spring to life, with all their color and brightness, jumping up in front of us just as the rhythm flows with the words that are recited, striking a note of perfect harmony. Each scene spreads itself before us like a bright spark appearing from the distance, and gradually exhibiting its full, captivating splendor before our very eyes. Another spark is then produced by the very expressions that are used, and its rhythm strikes harmony between the scenes portrayed and the meanings illustrated. Consistency is felt in the flow of expression and harmony is unmistakable in the brilliantly painted scenes.

Beauty is the main feature here: The section attains its breathtaking climax, with scenes that are chosen for their beauty and wording and construction that are meticulously selected for their rhythm and power of expression. In addition, even the ideas floated here ad-

dress the basic truth of the Quranic message, with its infinitely rich meaning, and all from the angle of beauty. Thus, this truth appears to swim in a sea of absolute perfection.

Once the section has portrayed this universal scene with all its pointers to God's existence and His ability and perfect design, it then describes the beliefs of those who ascribe partners to God. Against this inspiring set up, these beliefs appear so singular. Their assertions are shown to be revolting delusions, and they are strongly denounced: *And they made as associates with God—the jinn—although He created them. And they falsely attributed to Him sons and daughters without knowledge. Glory be to Him! Exalted is He above what they allege.* (6:100)

Some of the Arabs in the pre-Quranic days of ignorance used to worship the jinn while not knowing exactly who those jinn were. These were merely the delusions of paganism. When a human being deviates from believing in the absolute Oneness of God, even partially, he is bound to increase his deviation. At first, the point of diversion seems to be too small to notice, but then the gap grows wider and wider. Those ancient Arabs used to follow the faith preached by the Prophet Ishmael, which was based on the belief in God's Oneness as preached by the Prophet Abraham. They subsequently deviated from this sound concept. Their deviation must have started in a small way, but then it went as far as to consider the jinn partners with God, when He Himself created them: *And they made as associates with God—the jinn.* (6:100)

Different forms of pagan communities were aware that there were evil beings, i.e. something similar to devils, and they feared those beings, whether they considered them evil spirits or evil creatures. Therefore, they used to provide offerings to them in order to circumvent their fury. Thereafter, they began to worship them. This form of paganism that prevailed in Arabia before the Quranic message is just one of many forms in which such misconceptions flourished and led to the worship of the jinn describing them as God's partners. The section uses a very simple sentence, conveyed in the Arabic text by just one word, to describe the stupidity of such beliefs: *Although He created them..* (6:100) The sarcasm here is very clear. If it is God, the Glorious who has created them, how is it, then, that they are His partners, sharing with Him the qualities of God and Lordship of the universe?

Their misconceptions were not confined to this aspect alone. Once idolatry or polytheism takes root, deviation never stops and delusions become rife. *And they invented for Him sons and daughters without knowledge. Glory be to Him! Exalted is He above what they*

allege. (6:100) It is all their inventions. The Quran uses here a particularly expressive word to denote 'invention', one which gives an impression of physical fabrication.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions,** (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message (6:95-6:100) calls for the deep questioning of our believes. What information are we given about the creation? Can it be interpreted as coming from any other than God? How many concepts of creation can you nae from these verses? Can one assume that God had the jinn as associates in this endeavor? What are the implications of such a belief when God created them?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to elaborate further on this in the classroom.
I was able to give an example of this in our classroom discussion.
I am beginning to be able to connect what I am learning to my life.

LESSON 55(12). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY USING INFORMATION, DATA, FACTS, OBSERVATION

HOW TO USE INFORMATION WILL BECOME CLEAR BY ANSWERING THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

Is this a fact or an ideal?
Are things always this way, or is this statement an expression of what people are trying to achieve?
Are these ideals yours?
Why or why not?
How have people attempted to achieve this ideal?
When did they not meet the ideal? Why?
What problems did they have?
Why? How can we better achieve these ideals?

How is this supposed to work in theory? Why?
What result is it supposed to have?
Why is that considered good?
How does this really work? Why?
What incorrect assumption is made in the theory?
What reasons are there for accepting this as it is?
For trying to make it closer to the ideal?
Is the way we actually do this justified? Why or why not?
If it is not justified, how can we correct it?

Have you ever thought something was true about yourself and acted in a way that was inconsistent with your ideal self?
Did you see yourself differently then?
Did you make efforts to change your behavior?
Can anyone think of ways to be more consistent?
Why is it often hard to be honest about yourself and the groups you belong to?

QURANIC CHAPTER 6: THE FLOCKS (AL-ANAM) SIGNS 6:101-6:110

Makkah: *He is Beginner of the heavens and the earth.*
How would He have a child when He is without a companion and He created everything
and He is Knowing of everything? (6:101)
That is God, your Lord. There is no god but He

—the One Who is Creator of everything—so worship Him.
For He is Trustee over everything. (6:102)
No sight overtakes Him, but He overtakes sight.
And He is The Subtle, The Aware. (6:103)
Surely, clear evidence drew near you from your Lord.
So whoever perceived, it will be for his own soul.
Whoever was in darkness will be against his own soul.
Say: And I am not a guardian over you. (6:104)
And, thus, We diversify the signs and they will say:
***You** received instruction and We will make the Quran*
manifest for a folk who know. (6:105)
*Follow **you** what was revealed to **you** from **your** Lord.*
There is no god but He.
*Turn **you** aside from the ones who are idolaters.* (6:106)
And if God willed, they would not have
ascribed partners with Him,
*We made **you** not a guardian over them,*
*nor are **you** a trustee for them.* (6:107)
And offend not those who call to other than God
so that they not offend God out of spite without knowledge.
Thus, We made to appear pleasing the actions
of every community.
Again, to their Lord is their return.
Then, He will tell them what they had been doing. (6:108)
And they swear by God the most earnest sworn oaths
that if a sign would draw near them,
they would, certainly, believe in it.
Say: The signs are only with God.
And what will cause you to realize that
even if the signs were to draw near,
they would not believe? (6:109)
We will turn around and around their minds
and their sight as they believe not in it the first time.
And We will forsake them in their defiance,
wandering unwilling to see. (6:110)

COMMENTARY°

A CLEAR CONCEPT OF THE CREATOR

The section puts these allegations face to face against the absolute truth of God. It makes its arguments against these misconceptions in such a way that reveals how hollow they are: *He is Beginner of the heavens and the earth. How would He have a child when He*

is without a companion and He created everything and He is Knowing of everything? (6:101)

Here the section makes use of a recognized fact in order to address their minds, giving them examples that are relevant to their own lives and what they see around them. Moreover, the section gives special emphasis to the fact that all beings are created in order to disprove any suggestions of a multiplicity of gods. What is created can never be a partner to the Creator. The essence of the Creator and that of the created are totally different. The section speaks of God's knowledge as absolute, while the knowledge of the ungrateful is based on delusions and guesswork: *He is Beginner of the heavens and the earth. How would He have a child when He is without a companion and He created everything and He is Knowing of everything?* (6:101)

The same truth of creation is re-emphasized in order to assert another aspect. It tells that the One who is worshipped and obeyed and to whom submission is made is the creator of all things. Therefore, there is no deity save Him, the only Lord in the universe: *That is God, your Lord. There is no god but He—the One Who is Creator of everything—so worship Him. For He is Trustee over everything.* (6:102)

THE CHOICE TO REMAIN UNSEEING

The beauty is brought to its perfect, enthralling climax at the end of those scenes which describe the universe and which reach out to the One beyond. In this way we behold the Originator of the heavens and earth who has placed all these wonderful things in the universe. The section speaks of Him in images and expressions the beauty of which cannot be intimated except by the Quranic text itself: *No sight overtakes Him, but He overtakes sight. And He is The Subtle, The Aware.* (6:103)

In this passage we find an example of the linkage the Quran makes between pure worship and recognizing that God belongs only to God, the Creator and guardian of all: *That is God, your Lord. There is no god but He—the One Who is Creator of everything—so worship Him. For He is Trustee over everything.* (6:102)

The section follows with a description of God which is so powerful that it impresses man's whole being with connotations which I believe to be indescribable by any human language. Let us then allow these impressions to formulate as we behold the scene which allows God's reassuring attributes to be more prominent than His fear-inspiring attributes: *No sight overtakes Him, but He overtakes sight. And He is The Subtle, The Aware.*(6:103)

The section then comments on what it has already listed of signs and evidence available everywhere in the universe, and within the human soul itself. What follows serves also as a comment on the statement that concerns God's nature: *No sight overtakes Him, but He overtakes sight. And He is The Subtle, The Aware.* (6:103)

We have already said that no human language can explain or commentate on such a description. It imparts its own clear sense to our minds. However, it is followed by a significant comment: *Say: And I am not a guardian over you.* (6:104)

What God has given us is indeed the means of insight which provides guidance and points to the right way. The choice is then left to every individual. He who chooses to see will find himself in the light, equipped with guidance. Inevitably, the alternative is total blindness. No one deliberately persists in error after having seen these signs and received these insights except one who shuts out his senses, suppresses his feelings, stifles his conscience and remains blind. The Prophet is instructed to declare that he dissociates himself from them: *Say: And I am not a guardian over you.* (6:104)

Perhaps it is important to draw the readers' attention to the fact that in the Arabic text these signs use, in addition to their powerful rhythm, a few unmistakable and beautiful stylistic elements, such as alliteration and the juxtaposition of opposites. Thus, their effect, as we read them in Arabic, is immeasurably enhanced.

The section then addresses the Prophet, pointing out how revelations and signs of God's existence have been spelled out and explained in a way that could not fit with the Prophet's social environment or the fact that he could not read and write. For any open-minded person, this, in itself, is sufficient evidence to prove that these revelations were from God. But the idolaters did not wish to have such convincing evidence.

Therefore, they used to say that Muhammad had studied these questions of faith and those aspects of the universe with a Christian or a Jewish scholar. They did not realize that no Christian or Jew could have attained the standard of knowledge which remotely approached what the Prophet said to them. Indeed, no one on earth today can hope to reach anywhere near this level, superior as it is to all human knowledge. Therefore, the Prophet is instructed to follow what has been revealed to him and to turn away from the ungrateful: (6:105-6:107)

As for those who have true knowledge, the spelling out of revelations in the Quranic way allows them to realize the truth: *We will make the Quran manifest for a folk who know.* (6:105) As a result, the separation occurs between people endowed with knowledge and

insight who know the truth, and people who are blind and ignorant.

WELL-DEFINED ATTITUDES

This is followed by a divine order to the Prophet to follow what God has revealed to him and to turn away from pagan people who associate partners with Him. He is not to pay any attention to them or their petty arguments and not to worry about their stubborn rejection of his message. His task is to implement his message by molding his life and the attitudes of his followers on the basis of the divine message. He is to care nothing for the ungrateful: *Follow you what was revealed to you from your Lord. There is no god but He. Turn you aside from the ones who are polytheists.*(6:106)

Had God so willed, He would have imposed His guidance on them. He could, if He so willed, have created them knowing no way other than that of His guidance, in the same way as angels are bound always to obey Him. He, however, has created us with the ability to follow either right guidance or error. He has left us to choose our way and has held us accountable for our choice. All this is, of course, within the framework of God's absolute free will which governs everything that occurs in the universe, without imposing a choice on any human being. God has created us in this fashion for a purpose He knows. He has a role to play assigned to us by God, using his abilities and talents: *And if God willed, they would not have ascribed partners with Him, We made you not a guardian over them, nor are you a trustee for them.* (6:107)

The Prophet is not responsible for their actions, and he has not been assigned as a watchdog over their hearts: (6:107) his instruction to the Prophet defines the area around which he should concentrate his efforts. The Prophet's successors and those who advocate his faith in every generation and every community are also made aware of their area of activity and its limits.

BASIC FACTS ON FAITH AND GOD'S POWER

Moreover, the believers are instructed to adopt, as they turn away from the ungrateful, an attitude of propriety, decency and refinement which suits those who believe in God. They are instructed not to revile the idols or deities of the ungrateful so that the latter do not start to revile God, without knowing His true position and His majesty. Thus any abuse by the believers of their worthless deities would be taken as an excuse to abuse God, the Almighty: (6:108)

It is human nature that when a person does something, whether good or bad, he thinks that he has done well and he defends his actions. If he follows guidance, he finds it good; and if he is in error,

he still believes that his error is good. The ungrateful ascribed partners to God and appealed to them instead of appealing to Him; yet they accepted that God is the One who creates and provides sustenance.

The passage concludes by mentioning those ungrateful who used to swear most solemnly that if only a miracle, like those given to earlier prophets and messengers, were shown them they would certainly believe. On hearing such assurances, some Muslims suggested to the Prophet that he should pray to God to show them such a miracle. Here they are given a clear answer, which shows the nature of those people and their obstinate rejection of the divine faith: (6:109-6:110)

BASIC FACTS ON FAITH AND GOD'S POWER

Moreover, these signs outline certain basic facts that we must consider. The first of these facts is that to accept the faith or to deny it, to follow the right guidance or to remain in error, does not depend on the provision of proofs and evidence of the truth. The truth is its own proof and it can easily prevail over the human mind to accept it and submit to it with reassurance. There are impediments that may prevent a person from accepting the truth. Indeed, God refers to these as He addresses the believers: *And they swear by God the most earnest sworn oaths that if a sign would draw near them, they would, certainly, believe in it. Say: The signs are only with God. And what will cause you to realize that even if the signs were to draw near, they would not believe? We will turn around and around their minds and their sight as they believe not in it the first time. And We will forsake them in their defiance, wandering unwilling to see.* (6:109-6:110)

What prevented them the first time round from accepting divine guidance could happen again even after a miracle is shown them, and they could, thus, continue to go astray and reject guidance.

The pointers to faith are latent within us and are inherent within the truth itself. They do not relate to any external factor. It is imperative, therefore, that our heart be purged of all external factors impeding its acceptance of the faith.

The second fact is that God's will is the ultimate factor which determines who follows guidance and who goes astray. God has willed that human beings be tested, allowing us the freedom of choice to determine which course we follow. Anyone who utilizes this freedom in order to seek guidance with the intention of following it once it is received, though he may not know at that moment where he stands, will find that God, by His will, is helping him and showing him the right way. Conversely, a person who uses this freedom of choice to turn away from guidance and the pointers to faith, will find

himself further away from the truth, because God's will has determined that he should drift further astray and continue to grope in the dark. God's will prevails over human beings in all situations. It is He who determines everything in the end.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

What is the clear evidence that has drawn near us from our Lord according to the Quranic signs here? Analyze verses 6:104-6:105 as to information, interpretation, concepts, assumptions and implications.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to:

Raise basic issues.
Explore beneath the surface of things.
Follow-up problematic areas of thought.
Discover the structure of their own thought.
Develop sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
Arrive at judgment through their own reasoning.
Note claims, evidence, conclusions, questions-at-issue, assumptions, implications, consequences, concepts, interpretations, and the Quranic point of view.

Lesson 55(13). Critical Thinking Strategy Experiences, Reasoned Judgments

Any questions you ask require information. There are three aspects to this:

1. What are the questions I am being asked either explicitly or implicitly?
2. Does my thinking have a purpose?
3. How am I using the information?

If you have information, information never uses itself. Information never gives itself meaning. It deduces implications from itself. Information must be treated by the mind. It must be interpreted. Information must be given a meaning. As Quranic critical thinkers you must make certain to distinguish hard data from the inferences or conclusions that are drawn from them.

Quranic Chapter 6: The Flocks (al-Anam) Signs 6:111-6:121

Makkah: *And even if We sent down*
the angels to them
and the dead spoke to them
and we assembled everything against them,
face to face, yet they would not believe unless God wills,
except many of them are ignorant. (6:111)
And, thus, We made an enemy for every Prophet,
satans from among humankind and the jinn.
Some of them reveal to some others an ornamented saying,
a delusion.
*And if **your** Lord willed, they would not have accomplished it.*
So forsake them and what they devise, (6:112)
while minds will bend towards it
of those who believe not in the world to come
and they will be well-pleased with it.
And they will gain what the ones who gain, gain. (6:113)
Madinah (6:114)
Makkah: *Completed was the Word of **your** Lord in sincerity*
and justice.
There is no one who changes His Words.
And He is The Hearing, The Knowing. (6:115)
*And if **you** obey most of who are on the earth,*
*they will cause **you** to go astray from the way of God.*
They follow nothing but opinion and they only guess. (6:116)

*Truly, **your** Lord is He Who is greater in knowledge*
of who goes astray from His way.
And He is greater in knowledge
of the ones who are truly guided. (6:117)
So eat of that over which the Name of God
was remembered if you had been
ones who believe in His signs. (6:118)
And why should you not eat of that over which
the Name of God was remembered on it?
Surely, He explained distinctly to you
what He forbade to you unless you were driven by necessity to it.
And, truly, many cause others to go astray
by their desires without knowledge.
*Truly, **your** Lord, He is greater in knowledge*
of the ones who exceed the limits. (6:119)
And forsake manifest sin and its inward part.
Truly, those who earn sin, they will be given recompense
for what they had been gaining. (6:120)
Eat not of that over which the Name of God
is not remembered on it.
Truly, it is contrary to moral law.
And, truly, the satans will reveal to their protectors
so that they dispute with you and if you obeyed them,
truly, you would be of the ones who are idolaters. (6:121)

COMMENTARY°

The rest of the section tackles the question of God's authority over people's lives and the law they implement. Therefore, the section repeatedly emphasizes that all authority belongs to God who continues to govern the destiny of those who disobey Him and turn away from His constitution. These people cannot do any harm to believers, unless God so wills. Indeed, they are too weak to have any authority over themselves, let alone over believers. What takes place in life is simply the fulfilment of God's will as it relates to both those who obey Him and those who refuse to do so: *And even if We sent down the angels to them and the dead spoke to them and we assembled everything against them, face to face, yet they would not believe unless God wills, except many of them are ignorant.* (6:111)

With this passage we begin discussion of the great issue treated in the remainder of this section: (6:112-121)

The groundwork for this discussion has been prepared throughout the section, including the discussion of major faith concepts. Fur-

ther preparation is given in the first two signs of this passage which speak of the continuing battle launched against every Prophet by the evil ones among human beings and the jinn, and how this battle is resolved. The preparation may also be seen in earlier references to the rules that govern divine guidance and how people react to it. Now the section dwells on the issue of what is lawful or forbidden of slaughtered animals, and whether God's name is invoked at the time of their slaughter or not.

The first two signs serve as a prelude to the important issues that relate to authority, law and sovereignty which take up the remaining part of this section. (6:112-113)

The passage then emphasizes once more that the authority to legislate in all matters that relate to human life belongs to God alone. This is preliminary to stating that it is God who determines which slaughtered animals are lawful to eat and which are forbidden. Those who associate partners with God often exercise this authority in blatant aggression against God and His sovereignty. We note that a long prelude is included here before the issue is clearly tackled: (6:114-117)

These four signs serve as a long preamble, introducing the main subject and closely relating it to the central issue of acceptance or denial of the faith: (6:118-119)

Before the discussion of the question of permissibility and prohibition is completed, the section gives a number of instructions with strong overtones of authority and warning: (6:119-6:120)

The question of permissibility and prohibition is then resumed and linked directly to the question of submission to God alone, as opposed to associating partners with Him: *Eat not of that over which the Name of God is not remembered on it. Truly, it is contrary to moral law. And, truly, the satans will reveal to their protectors so that they dispute with you and if you obeyed them, truly, you would be of the ones who are polytheists.* (6:121)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Write a paragraph in answer to these questions: What are signs 6:118-

6:120 referring to? What is their purpose? What questions does it cause you to think about? What information does it give? What are the assumptions? How to you interpret it? What are the implications if someone does not follow what it says?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to:

Evaluate Reasoning by:•
Use specific analytic techniques, such as making assumptions explicit and evaluating them
Clarify issues, conclusions, values, and words
Develop criteria for evaluation
Recognize and pinpointing contradictions
Distinguish relevant from irrelevant facts

LESSON 55(14). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION: CLARIFYING VALUES AND STANDARDS

HOW IS DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION BY CLARIFYING VALUES AND STANDARDS USED IN THE QURAN?

CRITERIA INCLUDE

Clear evidence: *Surely, clear evidence drew near you from your Lord. So whoever perceived, it will be for his own soul. Whoever was in darkness will be against his own soul. Say: And I am not a guardian over you.* **(6:104)**

Meditation, pondering, considering: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* **(38:29)**

Recollection: *And his folk argued with him. He said: You argue with me about God while, surely, He guided me? I fear not whatever partners you ascribe with Him. When my Lord wills a thing, my Lord encompassed everything in His knowledge. Will you not, then, recollect?* **(6:80)**

Reflection: *And among His signs are that He created for you spouses from among yourselves, that you rest in them. And He made affection and mercy among you. Truly, in that are certainly signs for a folk who reflect.* **(30:21)**

Taking to heart: *And whomever God wants, He guides him. He expands his breast for The Submission to One God. And whomever He wants to cause to go astray, He makes his breast tight, troubling, as if he had been climbing up a difficult ascent. Thus, God assigns disgrace on those who believe not. And this is the path of your Lord, one that is straight. Surely, We explained distinctly the signs for a folk who recollect.* **(6:125-6:126)**

Convincing proof from reliable and certain premises: *Say: Prepare your proof. This is a Remembrance for him who is with me and a Remembrance of him before me. Nay! Most of them know not The Truth, so they are ones who turn aside.* **(21:24)**

Bringing your proof, showing your evidence: *Is not He better Who begins creation, again, will cause it to return and Who provides you from the heaven and the earth. Is there a god besides God? Say: Prepare your proof if you had been ones who are sincere!* **(27:64)**

People of intellect and reflection: *It is He Who caused water to descend from heaven for you to drink from it and from it, trees wherein you pasture your herds. He caused crops to develop for you with it, and the olives and the date palms and the grapevines, and all kinds of fruits. Truly, in that is a sign for a folk who reflect.* **(16:10-16:11)**

Explaining distinctly: *And it is He Who made the stars for you so that*

you will be truly guided by them in the shadows of dry land and the sea. Surely, We explained distinctly the signs for a folk who know. **(6:97-6:98)**

Being reasonable: *And He caused to be subservient to you the nighttime and the daytime and the sun and the moon, and the stars, ones caused to be subservient by His command. Truly, in that are signs for a folk who are reasonable.* **(16:12)**

Being just and fair: *O those who believed! Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God and let not that you detest a folk drive you into not dealing justly. Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness. And be God-conscious of God. Truly, God is Aware of what you do.* (5:8)

Critical thinkers understand the difference between indicating a preference for something and evaluating something. They are aware of the process and the necessary criteria in order to provide a thoughtful and fair-minded evaluation. They make use of explicit criteria.

They base their judgments on values that they have clarified and understood. When discussing the criteria of the Quranic message, critical Quranic thinkers first both understand the issue in question and the purpose of the evaluation and what function the issue being evaluated is to serve. They do this by taking into consideration various points of view in their evaluation.

The Quranic message understands the important relationship of evidence to belief and so often may qualify its statements accordingly. The tentativeness of many of its signs is characterized by the appropriate use of such qualifiers as: highly likely, probably, not very likely, highly unlikely, often, usually, seldom, I doubt, I suspect, most, many, and some. Critical thinkers are not only clear, but also exact or precise.

What information does the Quran give in this sign?
What information do I need to answer my question?

Then, believe you in some of the Book, and are ungrateful for some? (2:85)

QURANIC CHAPTER 6: THE FLOCKS (AL-ANAM)
SIGNS 6:122-6:129

Makkah: *Is he who had been lifeless*
and We gave him life and We made a light for him
by which he walks among humanity
like he who is in the shadows
and is not one who goes forth from them?
Thus, it was made to appear pleasing to ones who are ungrateful
what they had been doing. (6:122)

And, thus, We made in every town greater ones
who sin that they plan in it.
Yet they plan not but against themselves
although they are not aware. (6:123)
And when a sign drew near them they said:
We will not believe until we are given the like
of what was given to Messengers of God.
God is greater in knowledge where to assign His message.
On those who sinned will light contempt from God
and a severe punishment
for what they had been planning. (6:124)
And whomever God wants, He guides him.
He expands his breast for The Submission to One God.
And whomever He wants to cause to go astray,
He makes his breast tight, troubling,
as if he had been climbing up a difficult ascent.
Thus, God assigns disgrace
on those who believe not. (6:125)
And this is the path of ***your*** *Lord, one that is straight.*
Surely, We explained distinctly the signs
for a folk who recollect. (6:126)
For them is the abode of peace with their Lord.
And He is their protector for what they had been doing. (6:127)
And mention on a Day He will assemble them altogether.
O assembly of the jinn! Surely, you acquired much
from humankind.
And their protectors among humankind would say:
Our Lord! Some of us enjoyed some others
and we reached our term
that was appointed by ***You*** *for us.*
He would say: The fire is your place of lodging,
ones who will dwell in it forever, but what God willed.
Truly, ***your*** *Lord is Wise, Knowing.* (6:128)
And, thus, that is how We make some of them friends
with some others who are ones who are unjust to one another
for what they had been earning. (6:129)

COMMENTARY°

Next we have a full treatment of the nature of both faith and disbelief. The following signs speak of God's will that manifests itself in every community, even where the most hardened of criminals scheme and give themselves airs. Their arrogance prevents them

from accepting the faith. This concludes with a splendid image portraying the faith that opens people's hearts and minds, contrasting it with the oppressive situation of ingratitude, which weighs heavily on people's minds. The whole passage relates to the question of prohibition and permissibility concerning slaughtered animals, in the same way as a basic rule is related to a detailed application. (6:122-6:125)

The final comment in this passage provides the last link between the issues of faith and legislation. Together they form God's straight path. To violate either of them is to abandon the path set by God. To stick to them both is to follow the path which leads to the abode of peace and ensures God's patronage to those who do well: *And this is the path of your Lord, one that is straight. Surely, We explained distinctly the signs for a folk who recollect. For them is the abode of peace with their Lord. And He is their protector for what they had been doing.* (6:126-6:127)

God has made plain His revelations, but it is those who take heed and do not overlook these revelations that benefit by such a detailed statement. A believer's heart is always alert, wide open, happy, alive, responsive. Those who reflect and take heed will enjoy the abode of peace with their Lord. Their reward will not fail to come. God will grant them His support as He takes good care of them to reward them for what they have been doing. They have passed the test well and their reward is generous indeed.

Once more we find ourselves looking at one of the fundamental issues of this faith, showing God's straight path to reflect the recognition of His sovereignty and the following of His code. Beyond both lies faith. Together they define the nature of the Quranic message as stated by the Lord of the universe.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?

4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

Analyze 6:125-6:126 based on the criterion of "taking to heart" mentioned at the beginning of the lesson.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to develop and clarify criteria for evaluating writing.
Continually evaluate written material and discuss its criteria.
Specific points should be explained in terms of the nine standards that you support (such as clarity).

LESSON 55(15). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ACTIONS

You should evaluate your actions in regard to Prophets of the past.

QURANIC CHAPTER 6: THE FLOCKS (AL-ANAM)
SIGNS 6:130-6:140

Makkah: *O assembly of jinn and humankind!*
Approach not Messengers from among yourselves
relating to you My signs,
and warning you of the meeting of this, your Day?
They said: We bore witness against ourselves.
This present life deluded them
and they bore witness against themselves
that they had been ones who are ungrateful. (6:130)
That is because ***your*** *Lord would never be*
One Who Causes to Perish towns unjustly
while their people are ones who are heedless. (6:131)
And for everyone there are degrees for what they did.
And ***your*** *Lord is not One Who is Heedless*
of what they do. (6:132)
Thy Lord is The Sufficient, Possessor of Mercy.
If He wills, He will cause you to be put away
and will make a successor after you of whomever He wills,
just as He caused you to grow
from offspring of other folk. (6:133)
Truly, what you are promised is, certainly,
that which arrives and you will not be
ones who frustrate it. (6:134)
Say: O my folk! Act according to your ability.
Truly, I too am one who acts.
Then, you will know for whom the Ultimate End
will be the abode.
Truly, the ones who are unjust will not prosper. (6:135)
And they assigned to God of what He made
numerous of cultivation and flocks a share.
Then, they said in their claim:
This is for God and this is for our ascribed associates.
But what had been ascribed for their associates then,
reaches not out to God
and what had been ascribed for God
then, reaches out to their associates.
How evil is the judgment they give! (6:136)

And, thus, made to appear pleasing
to many of the ones who are idolaters
was the killing of their children
by those whom they ascribe as associates with Him
so that they deal them destruction
and so that they confuse their way of life for them.
And if God willed, they would not have accomplished it.
So forsake them and what they devise. (6:137)
And they said: These flocks and cultivation are banned.
None should taste them, but whom we will, so they claim.
And there are flocks whose backs were forbidden and flocks
that they remember not the Name of God on it,
a devising against Him.
He will give them recompense
for what they had been devising. (6:138)
And they said: What is in the bellies of these flocks
is exclusively for our males
and is that which is forbidden to our female spouses,
but if it would be born dead, then, they are ascribed
as associates in it.
He will give recompense to them for their allegations.
Truly, He is Wise, Knowing. (6:139)
They, surely, lost those who foolishly kill their children
without knowledge.
They forbade what God provided them in a devising against God.
They, surely, went astray
and had not been ones who are truly guided. (6:140)

COMMENTARY°

Let us reflect for a moment on the remarkable Quranic style which paints future events so that we can visualize them now, as if they were taking place in front of our very eyes. The Quran is revealed so that it is read to people in this life, in their own surroundings. But it portrays the scenes of the life to come as if they are taking place now, while scenes of this life belong to an era which has long since passed. In this way, we forget that the Day of Judgment is still to come. We feel that it is here, now. This is only made possible by the remarkable style of the Quran: *O assembly of jinn and humankind! Approach not Messengers from among yourselves relating to you My signs, and warning you of the meeting of this, your Day? They said: We bore witness against ourselves. This present life deluded them and they bore witness against themselves that they had*

been ones who are ungrateful.(6:130)

When the scene is complete, the address is made to God's Messenger, his followers and to humanity generally. The address includes a comment on the judgment made against evil human beings and jinn and the fact that such a great multitude are condemned to the fire. Their fate is sealed only after they have testified against themselves that they continued to disbelieve despite receiving messengers who related to them God's revelations and warned them against what awaited them of God's punishment if they continued to reject the faith. The comment here makes it clear that God's punishment does not befall anyone without warning. God does not hold people accountable and does not punish them for their disbelief until after they have been shown the fact and received warnings from God's messengers who relate His revelations to them: *That is because your Lord would never be One Who Causes to Perish towns unjustly while their people are ones who are heedless.*(6:131)

Another rule is stated concerning reward and punishment. It is applicable to believers and evil ones in equal measure: *And for everyone there are degrees for what they did.* (6:132) The believers have their grades, one above the other, while the evil ones have their own grades, one sinking below the other. They attain or sink into their grades according to their deeds which have been monitored to the finest detail: *And your Lord is not One Who is Heedless of what they do.* (6:132)

God sends His messengers to human beings as a gesture of His grace. He Himself has no need of them, their worship or even their belief in Him. When they do well, they only benefit themselves both in this life and in the life to come. His grace is also seen in the fact that He grants a chance to the disobedient generation which continues to do wrong and to deny Him altogether, while He is able to destroy it completely and bring in its place a different generation: *Your Lord is The Sufficient, Possessor of Mercy. If He wills, He will cause you to be put away and will make a successor after you of whomever He wills, just as He caused you to grow from offspring of other folk.* (6:133) Therefore, human beings must never forget that they survive only by God's grace, and that their existence depends on His will. Whatever power they enjoy, has been given to them by God. Theirs is not an intrinsic power or a self-determined existence. No one has any choice with regard to their coming into being, and no one determines what sort of power he can exercise. To remove them altogether and to bring another community in their place is very easy for God. After all, it is He who has brought them into being from the seed of a past generation so that they succeed that generation by His will.

This is followed by another strong warning note: *Truly, what you are promised is, certainly, that which arrives and you will not be ones who frustrate it.* (6:134) You are all the time within God's grasp and subject to His will. It is He who determines your fate, and you cannot resist Him or escape from your fate. The Day of Resurrection, a scene from which has just been painted, awaits you. It will inevitably come. When it does, nothing will avail you against God Almighty. The final comment includes an implicit, but highly effective warning: *Say: O my folk! Act according to your ability. Truly, I too am one who acts. Then, you will know for whom the Ultimate End will be the abode. Truly, the ones who are unjust will not prosper.* (6:135)

This is a warning made by one who is certain that he follows the truth and who has complete trust in the power of the truth, and of the great power that supports the truth. The warning is made by God's Messenger (peace be upon him) who says that he is disclaiming any responsibility for them, confident that what he has is the truth, absolutely certain of his way. He is also certain that what they follow is error and their prospects are very gloomy indeed: *Then, you will know for whom the Ultimate End will be the abode. Truly, the ones who are unjust will not prosper.* (6:135) This is an unfailing rule. Those who associate partners with God will never be successful, because success is granted only by God. Those who do not follow His guidance are in deep error and will end up as miserable losers.

The passage begins with a brief reference to a host of concepts that prevailed in tribal honor days, and the pagan practices of the Arabs concerning their agricultural produce, livestock and children. In other words, these practices related to their economic and social set-up. The following are given by way of example:

1. They divided the provisions of sustenance God gave them, their crops and cattle into two portions, assigning one to God and claiming that they did this in accordance with God's law. They assigned the other portion to the deities they invented and who they considered as partners with God, having power over their lives, wealth and children: *But what had been ascribed for their associates then, reaches not out to God and what had been ascribed for God then, reaches out to their associates. How evil is the judgment they give!* (6:136)

2. Having done so, they deal unfairly with the portion they assigned to God. They add a part of it to the portion assigned to their other deities or partners and never do the same with the other portion: *But what had been ascribed for their associates then, reaches not out to God and what had been ascribed for God then, reaches out to*

their associates. How evil is the judgment they give! (6:136)

3. They willingly kill their children, having been induced to do so by their partners. The partners in this case are their priests and lawmakers who initiate traditions which acquire a force of their own, relying on social pressure and ancient legends with their religious overtones. Such killing of children claimed the lives of their daughters in the first place for fear of poverty and shame. Occasionally, it claimed the life of a son, particularly when the slaughter of a son was made in the form of a religious offering. An example of this was the pledge made by Abdul Muttalib, the Prophet's grandfather, that should God give him ten sons to protect him, he would slay one of them as an offering to the gods: *And, thus, made to appear pleasing to many of the ones who are polytheists was the killing of their children by those whom they ascribe as associates with Him so that they deal them destruction and so that they confuse their way of life for them. And if God willed, they would not have accomplished it. So forsake them and what they devise.* (6:137)

4. They consecrated certain portions of their livestock and certain types of produce, falsely claiming that they could not be eaten without special permission from God. They also made certain animals unlawful to ride, and prohibited that God's name be mentioned over them at the time of slaughter or riding. They also prohibited such animals from being ridden at pilgrimage time, because pilgrimage involved glorifying God. They further claimed that all these restrictions had been ordered by God Himself:*And they said: Thes flocks and cultivation are banned. None should taste them, but whoi we will, so they claim. And there are flocks whose backs were forbidden and flocks that they remember not the Name of God on it, a devising against Him. He will give them recompense for what they had been devising.* (6:138)

5. They also consecrated what was in the bellies of their cattle to their men, prohibiting them to their women. However, if it happened to be stillborn, they would allow both males and females to partake of it. They attributed such absurdities to God: *And they said: What is in the bellies of these flocks is exclusively for our males and is that which is forbidden to our female spouses, but if it would be born dead, then, they are ascribed as associates in it. He will give recompense to them for their allegations. Truly, He is Wise, Knowing.* (6:139)

Such were the concepts and traditions which characterized Arabian society in ignorant, pre-Quranic days. This long passage, occurring in a Makkan section, seeks to put an end to them and to purge people's hearts and souls of their effects. The Quran follows a delib-

erate, slow and detailed approach in order to achieve its purpose.

It begins first by declaring that those who in their ignorance kill their children and forbid themselves what God has provided for them are indeed losers. These concepts they attribute to God are declared to be both absurd and erroneous.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

Who are those who kill their children? Analyze 6:137 based on the above criteria for Quranic Critical Thinking.

Answer the following questions.

What information are the ones who only believe in what was caused to descend to them using?
Where did they get that information?
What information is given about them?

What does this remind you of? Why?
How are the interpretations similar? Different?
How important are the differences? Why?
What does this tell us about our topic?
How useful is that comparison?
Can anyone think of an even more useful comparison?
What is the meaning behind the information given in the above signs?
What is the Quranic response to their assumption?

Lesson 55(16). Critical Thinking Strategy Distinguishing Relevant from Irrelevant Information

Developing Sensitivity to Relevance

You can then discover that sometimes you must argue for the relevance of a particular fact to an issue. Another technique for developing your sensitivity to relevance is to change an issue slightly and compare what was relevant to the first issue to what is relevant to the second. You could read the section and signs with one or more issues in mind and note relevant details. You could then share and discuss your lists. You can then discover that sometimes you must argue for the relevance of a particular fact to an issue. You may assume that they have to use all information they are given to ask a question. You need to learn how to limit your responses with only the relevant facts. Implications are deduced from information after the information is interpreted and given a meaning.

Learn to distinguish relevant from irrelevant facts. This is not always clear and, therefore, should be part of a classroom discussion. You should also be aware that a fact that is relevant for one situation may not be relevant to a different one.

When discussing an issue, solution to a problem, or when giving reasons for a conclusion, you can practice limiting your remarks to facts which are relevant to that or conclusion. Don't assume that all information given has to be used to solve a problem. Life does not sort relevant from irrelevant information for us. Make a case for the pertinence of your remarks, and see when your remarks are irrelevant.

Quranic Chapter 6: The Flocks (al-Anam) Signs 6:141-6:144

Madinah (6:141)

Makkah: *And of the flocks are some as beasts of burden*
and some for slaughter.
Eat of what God provided you and follow not in the steps of Satan.
Truly, he is a clear enemy to you. (6:142)
Eight diverse pairs; two of sheep and two of goats.
Say: Forbade He the two males or the two females?
Or what is contained in the wombs of the two females?
Tell me with knowledge
if you had been ones who are sincere. (6:143)
And of the camels two and of cows two, say:
Forbade He the two males or the two females
or what is contained in the wombs of the two females?
Had you been witnesses when God charged you with this?

Then, who does greater wrong than he
who devised a lie against God
to cause humanity to go astray without knowledge.
Truly, God guides not the folk, the ones who are unjust. (6:144)

COMMENTARY°

The section then speaks in full detail of the absurdity of their concepts concerning their flocks. These concepts are made to appear hollow, stupid and inconsistent. It concludes by asking them what basis they have for such absurd laws: *Had you been witnesses when God charged you with this?* (6:144) Was it, then, a secret that you have been let into, or a commandment given specially to you? It follows this by describing the ghastly nature of the crime of inventing falsehood against God and trying to lead people astray. This condemnation is one of the most effective aspects of the Quranic method.

The Arabs' absurdity exposed, they are now made to realize that the false concepts they held before the revelation have no foundation whatsoever. They are given an example to reflect upon in that God has brought into existence all their crops and flocks, yet they felt they had the right to determine how these were allocated, either by following their own whims or acting on the inspiration of evil ones. They did so knowing that those who were evil did not create the crops and flocks, but that these were of God's creation. Therefore, it is He who determines what use is to be made of His creation given to His servants as sustenance or property.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?

7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

In determining the difference between relevance, the Quran asks a rhetorical question: Had you been witnesses when God charged you with this way of forbidding certain animals? The Quranic message mentions two kinds of flocks—beasts of burden and those who are for slaughtering. It is God Who provides them. Satan has created nothing. The only prohibitions come from God. To state otherwise is to cause humanity to go astray.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I understand what a rhetorical question is.

I realize the importance of the Quran saying that no one will bear the results of another person's actions.

It is an important Quranic concept that each person is responsible for their own beliefs and actions.

LESSON 55(17). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
GIVING REASONS AND EVALUATING EVIDENCE

Quranic critical thinkers have learned on which evidence to base their conclusion. They can insightfully discuss evidence relevant to the issue or conclusions they consider. They scrutinize and evaluate factual claims.

HISTORY

Al-Tabari, a leading early commentator on the Quran, says: God, limitless is He in His glory, gives here clear instructions to His Prophet Muhammad. He is to say to those who had assigned a portion of God's creation of flocks to Him and another portion to the partners they associated with Him, who had made certain types of flocks forbidden so that none may eat of them save those whom they permitted, who made some flocks forbidden to ride, or made what was in the wombs of their flocks forbidden to their women, lawful to their men, who made unlawful what God provided for them as sustenance, falsely attributing such prohibitions to God; he should ask them all: Has a messenger sent by God come to you with such prohibitions? If so, then tell us about that. Or is it that you yourselves have been present, witnessing the issuing of God's commandments of prohibition? Or could it be that you heard Him as He made the prohibition and you acted on that? If so, then you are liars inventing falsehood against God. Should you make any such claim, people will know that you are liars.

The Prophet is further instructed to make it clear to them that he does not find in what has been revealed to him of God's Book anything forbidden to eat, including all that they claimed to be unlawful, except for four types: "carrion", which refers to an animal dying by itself without being properly slaughtered, or "blood poured forth, or the flesh of swine". All three types are pronounced to be "unclean" which means that they are impure. The fourth forbidden type is "a sinful offering" which refers to an animal slaughtered by an idolater and consecrated to one of the idols they associated with God. Such an offering is forbidden to make and to eat by anyone who believes in God.

Thus God, limitless is He in His glory, tells those who are ungrateful who argued with the Prophet and his Companions concerning the prohibition of carrion that God has made forbidden the very thing they were arguing about. As such, it is unlawful. On the other hand, that which the idolaters claimed to be forbidden remains lawful, since God has made it so. They were lying when they claimed that their prohibition relied on God's authority.

QURANIC CHAPTER 6: THE FLOCKS (AL-ANAM)
SIGNS 6:145-6:150

Makkah: *Say: I find not in what was revealed to me to taste*
that which is forbidden to taste,
but that it be carrion or blood,
that which is shed or the flesh of swine for that,
truly, is a disgrace or was hallowed
—contrary to moral law—to other than God on it.
Then, whoever was driven by necessity
other than being one who is willfully disobedient
or one who turns away.
Then, truly, your Lord is Forgiving, Compassionate. (6:145)
And to those who became Jews,
We forbade every possessor of claws.
And of the cows and the herd of sheep,
We forbade them their fat,
but what their backs carried or entrails
or what mingled with bone.
Thus, we gave them recompense for their insolence
and We are, truly, ones who are sincere. (6:146)
If they denied thee, say:
Your Lord is the Possessor of Extensive Mercy.
And His might is not repelled from the folk
ones who sin. (6:147)
Those who ascribed partners with God will say:
If God willed, neither would we have ascribed partners with God,
nor our fathers, nor would we have forbidden anything.
Thus, denied those who were before them
until they experienced Our might.
Say: Is there any knowledge with you
that you bring out to us?
You follow not but opinion and, then, you only guess. (6:148)
Say: God has the conclusive disputation.
And if He willed, He would have guided you one and all. (6:149)
Say: Come on! Bring your witnesses who bear witness
that God forbade this. Then, if they bore witness,
bear you not witness with them.
And follow you not the desires of those who denied Our signs
and those who believe not in the world to come
and they equate others with their Lord. (6:150)

COMMENTARY°

In these signs God spells out clearly to them what He has actually forbidden, making His prohibition clear through revelations, not through guesswork and imagination. It goes without saying that God has the authority to legislate, and that what He forbids is totally forbidden and what He makes lawful is absolutely lawful. No human being can have any say in this, and He has no partners to make a similar decision or to add to or amend His prohibition. Within the same context, we have here an explanation of what God has forbidden the Jews in particular, although He has made it lawful to the Muslims. This prohibition was by way of punishment to the Jews for their wrongdoing and their deviation from God's law. (6:145-6:147)

It discusses how the Arab idolaters used to attribute to God's will the fact that they lived in ignorance, evidenced by their association of partners with God and the forbidding of what God had made lawful. Both actions carry the same legal status in God's view. It quotes their statements:*hose who ascribed partners with God will say: If God willed, neither would we have ascribed partners with God, nor our fathers, nor would we have forbidden anything. Thus, denied those who were before them until they experienced Our might.* (6:148) The section makes it clear that such a statement can only be made by an unbeliever who denies the truth. Earlier generations of the ungrateful maintained the same assertions until they were struck with God's might: "In like manner did those who have lived before them deny the truth, until they came to taste Our punishment." (6:148) To associate partners with God is the same as the unauthorized declaration of anything as forbidden. Both are done by those who deny God's revelations. A rhetorical question is put to them concerning the basis of their assertions: *Say: Is there any knowledge with you that you bring out to us? You follow not but opinion and, then, you only guess.* (6:148)

The discussion is brought to a conclusion by inviting them to make an unequivocal declaration and clear testimony of their stand. This is the same invitation as the one made at the beginning of the section concerning the very basis of faith. In both cases, the same expression, indeed the same terminology is used in order to indicate that the two aspects are the same: associating partners with God and legislating without His permission: *Say: Come on! Bring your witnesses who bear witness that God forbade this. Then, if they bore witness, bear you not witness with them. And follow you not the desires of those who denied Our signs and those who believe not in the world to come and they equate others with their Lord.* (6:150) This

sign makes it clear that those who promulgate these legislations are indeed the ones who follow their own desires, deny God's revelations and disbelieve in the life to come. Had they believed in what God has revealed and in the Day of Judgment, and had they followed God's guidance, they would not have legislated for themselves or for humanity anything that God has not permitted. Nor would they have described things as lawful or unlawful without God's permission.

The section goes on to outline what God has actually forbidden. Here we have a collection of the basic principles of social life, beginning with the belief in God's Oneness. Some of these principles include certain orders, but the prohibitions form the larger part. Therefore, they provide the overall title. God has forbidden that divinity be ascribed to anyone other than Him. He has commanded all people to be kind to their parents and He has forbidden the killing of children out of poverty, reassuring people that He provides for them. He has also forbidden all types of indecency and shameful sin, whether committed in the open or in secret, as well as the killing of other human beings except in a just cause. He has also forbidden any tampering with the property of an orphan, except to improve it, until he has come of age. He has ordered that people should deal in fair weights and measures and ordered that justice be maintained in all types of statements and testimony. He has further ordered that people should fulfil their covenants with God. All this has been enjoined by God on people. Therefore, they are reminded that it is their duty to fulfil it.

QURANIC CHAPTER 6: THE FLOCKS (AL-ANAM) SIGNS 6:151-6:154

Madinah: (6:151)
Madinah: (6:152)
Madinah: (6:153)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (6:154)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

Analyze 6:149-6:150 based on Quranic Critical Thinking criteria.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I tried to find the key concept of the course during the first couple of class meetings.

I was able to relate that definition to each segment of what I learned afterward.

I realized that fundamental ideas are the basis for all others.

LESSON 55(18). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY MAKING INTERPRETATIONS, INFERENCES, CONCLUSIONS

HOW TO APPROACH THE QURAN

Quranic critical readers approach the sacred text with a view to entering a silent dialogue with God. They realize they must actively reconstruct God's meaning. They read because there is much that they know they do not know, much to experience that they have not experienced. Thus, critical readers do not simply pass their eyes over the words with the intention of filling their memories. They question, organize, interpret, synthesize, and digest what they read. They question, not only what was said, but also what was implied and presupposed. They organize the details, not only around key ideas in the work, but also around their own key ideas. They not only conclude, they recognize their conclusions as conclusions, and consider alternative conclusions.•

Recognizing your conclusions as such, you revise and refine them. You do not simply accept or reject; you work to make ideas your own, accepting what makes most sense, rejecting what does not fit your new understanding into their existing frameworks of thought.

WHAT IS AN IMPLICATION, CONCLUSION?

In Quranic Studies you learn to come to conclusions based on conditional reasoning (if ... then ...) given in the particular Quranic signs you are studying where a major general premise combines with a more specific minor premise. As you study the Quranic signs, you should look for information and then separate the information from the conclusion.

To reach a conclusion, respond with your own conception of what you are studying. Place it in the context of your own experience, perspective, point of view, or philosophy. For example, you may conclude from the silence of another person towards you as an expression of hostility. This conclusion may or may not be correct. It may be based on your own patterns of motivation and behavior that you projected onto the other person.

Conclusions should be distinguished from the facts, the evidence, the situation. The best conclusions take the most evidence into account. Critical thinkers recognize the conclusions of the Quranic signs they are studying, distinguish them from evidence, consider alternative interpretations, and reconsider their interpretations in the light of new evidence.

ALL LEARNING INVOLVES:

All learning involves personal interpretation, since whatever you learn you must integrate into your own thinking and action. What you learn must be given a meaning by you, must be meaningful to you, and therefore involves interpretive acts on your part.

Quranic Chapter 6: The Flocks (al-Anam)
Signs 6:155-6:165

And this Book We caused to descend is
that which is blessed so follow it and be God-conscious
so that perhaps you will find mercy, (6:155)
so that you not say: The Book was only caused to descend
to two sections before us.
And, truly, we had been ones who are heedless of their study. (6:156)
Or so that you not say: If the Book was caused to descend to us,
we would have been better guided than they.
Surely, there drew near you clear portents from your Lord
and a guidance and a mercy.
And who, then, does greater wrong than he
who denied the signs of God and drew aside from them.
We will give recompense to those who draw aside from Our signs
with a dire punishment because they had been drawing aside. (6:157)
Look they on only that the angels approach them?
*Or **your** Lord approach them?*
*Or some signs of **your** Lord approach them?*
*On a Day that approach some signs of **your** Lord,*
belief will not profit a person if he believed not before,
nor earned good because of his belief.
Say: Wait awhile! We too are ones who are waiting awhile! (6:158)
Truly, those who separated and divided their way of life
*and had been partisans, be **you** not concerned with them at all.*
Truly, their affair is only with God.
Again, He will tell them what they had been accomplishing. (6:159)
Whoever drew near with benevolence, then, for him,
ten times the like of it.
And whoever drew near with an evil deed, then,
recompense will not be given but with its like
and they, they will not be wronged. (6:160)
Say: Truly, my Lord guided me to a straight path,
a truth-loving way of life, the creed of Abraham,
the monotheist. And he had not been
of the ones who are idolaters. (6:161)
Say: Truly, my formal prayer and my ritual sacrifice
and my living and my dying are for God, Lord of all the worlds. (6:162)
No associates are to be ascribed with Him
and of this was I commanded and I am the first
of the ones who submit to God. (6:163)
Say: Is it other than God that I should desire as a lord

while He is Lord of everything?
And each soul will earn only for itself.
No burdened soul will bear another's heavy load.
Again, to your Lord will you return. Then, He will tell you about what you had been at variance in it. (6:164)
And it is He who made you as viceregents on the earth
and exalted some of you above some others in degree
that He try you with what He gave you.
Truly, your Lord is Swift in repayment
and He, truly, is Forgiving, Compassionate. (6:165)

COMMENTARY

Now that you have the Quran, you do not need to refer to anything else. It covers all aspects of life. Therefore, they do not need to legislate for any purpose without guidance: *So that you not say: The Book was only caused to descend to two sections before us. And, truly, we had been ones who are heedless of their study. Or so that you not say: If the Book was caused to descend to us, we would have been better guided than they. Surely, there drew near you clear portents from your Lord and a guidance and a mercy.* (6:156)

It has been God's will that every messenger was sent to his people, speaking their language. When He willed to send His final message, He sent the last of all prophets, Muhammad, to all humanity. As His final Messenger, it is only right that he should address all humanity equally.

This Book has been revealed and given to the early followers by a Messenger from among them, even though he is a Messenger to all humanity. The Book he brings is, in itself, a clear proof of its truth. It gives them some very clear, unambiguous and unequivocal information. It provides them with guidance out of the error in which they live, and ensures God's grace will be bestowed on them in this life as well as in the life to come.

Bearing all this in mind, who could be more in the wrong than one who denies God's revelations and turns his back on them when they show him the way to goodness and success? Who is more unjust to himself and to humanity by denying himself and others all these blessings, and by spreading corruption on earth through upholding ignorant concepts and laws? *And who, then, does greater wrong than he who denied the signs of God and drew aside from them. We will give recompense to those who draw aside from Our signs with a dire punishment because they had been drawing aside.* (6:157)

Here, this section explains: *Look they on only that the angels*

*approach them? Or **your** Lord approach them? Or some signs of **your** Lord approach them?* (6:158) This is a very clear and decisive warning. Here, God tells the ungrateful in plain terms that if only some of the signs they ask for were shown to them, they would be destroyed thereafter should they continue to be ungrateful. They are further told that when some of God's signs are shown, they spell the end that renders all subsequent actions futile.

Accepting the faith should come before this, and should be translated into practical action. Good action is always associated with true faith, as it is, in the Islamic view, the practical translation of faith. *On a Day that approach some signs of **your** Lord, belief will not profit a person if he believed not before, nor earned good because of his belief. Say: Wait awhile! We too are ones who are waiting awhile!* (6:158).

It should be noted that this section repeats what it has said within the context of faith and belief when it speaks about God's sovereignty and law. This is clearly seen and intentionally used to emphasize a particular fact. Therefore, it is better to interpret the statements that occur here in the same light as those which occur at its beginning, reading them as referring to the laws of nature God has set in operation. This is sufficient to understand the Quranic statements without having to resort to something that we cannot fathom because it is beyond the reach of our perception.

At this point the section addresses God's Messenger, Muhammad singling him out with his faith, law, way of life and operational mode. His faith is different from all creeds and religions known to humanity, including the erring ways of the Arab idolaters: *Truly, those who separated and divided their way of life and had been partisans, be **you** not concerned with them at all.* (6:159)

As for those who have split into groups over their faith, and about whom God has declared that His Messenger will have nothing to do with them, they will be judged by God, and then they will have to account for all their deeds: *Truly, their affair is only with God. Again, He will tell them what they had been accomplishing.* (6:159) As accountability and reward are mentioned here, God states what mercy He has committed Himself to show to His servants. He will reward every good deed done by a believer ten times its value. It is a condition that such a good deed is done by a believer, because with rejection of faith no deed remains good. On the other hand, a person who does a bad deed is requited with its like only. God will never be unjust to anyone or stint his or her reward: *Whoever drew near with benevolence, then, for him, ten times the like of it. And whoever drew near with an evil deed, then, recompense will not be given but with*

its like and they, they will not be wronged. (6:160)

At the end of this section with its long discourse on legislation and sovereignty we have a devotional glorification of God which carries with it a pleasant rhythm and a decisive verdict. The beat is repeated in each verse as it starts with the same word: '*Say*'. Each verse touches the heart, where the core of oneness lies: the oneness of the creed, goal, Lord and worship. It also provides a total look at the universe and its laws: (6:161-6:165)

This long and final comment plays a fascinating, perfectly harmonious tune. Yet it is a comment which concludes the discourse on animal slaughtering, offerings, agricultural produce and all the regulations alleged by the people of ignorance to be laid down by God.

Say: Truly, my Lord guided me to a straight path, a truth-loving way of life, the creed of Abraham, the monotheist. And he had not been of the ones who are polytheists. (6:161) This declaration expresses gratitude and trust, and overflows with certainty. We see the certainty in both the verbal expression in worship and its mental effect. The trust is derived from the bond with the Lord who guides and takes care of His servants. The gratitude is felt for being guided to a straight way that is free of diversion and crookedness.

Say: Truly, my formal prayer and my ritual sacrifice and my living and my dying are for God, Lord of all the worlds. No associates are to be ascribed with Him (6:162-6:163) This expresses complete dedication, with every pulse and every life movement. It is a form of glorification of God and submission to Him in the most absolute of terms: it combines obligatory and voluntary prayer, life and death. All is dedicated to God alone, the Lord of all the worlds, who controls and sustains them all and conducts and determines all their affairs. It is the sort of submission to God that leaves out nothing within oneself, one's conscience or in life, without dedicating it totally to God. *of this was I commanded and I am the first of the ones who submit to God* (6:163)

Say: Is it other than God that I should desire as a lord while He is Lord of everything? And each soul will earn only for itself. No burdened soul will bear another's heavy load. Again, to your Lord will you return. Then, He will tell you about what you had been at variance in it. (6:164) This is a word that encompasses all the heavens and earth as well as all that is in or on them, every creature known or unknown to the human being, everything to be done or to take place in public or private. It puts them all under the umbrella of God's Lordship of everything in the universe. They must all submit to God's absolute sovereignty in faith, worship and law. This verse asks rhetorically and in amazement: *Is it other than God that I should desire as*

a lord while He is Lord of everything? (6:164) Am I to seek a lord other than God to be my master who conducts my affairs and determines my course in life, when I am accountable to God for my intentions and actions, and will be rewarded for whatever obedience or disobedience to God I do? Am I to seek a lord other than God when this whole universe is in His hand, and both you and I are sustained by Him? Am I to seek a lord other than God when everyone will be requited for his or her sins? No one shall bear responsibility for anyone else's actions. *And each soul will earn only for itself. No burdened soul will bear another's heavy load.* (6:164)

Am I to seek a lord other than God when to Him you must all return and face His reckoning of all that over which you are in dispute? Am I to seek a lord other than God when it is He who has placed human beings on earth to inherit it, and placed some of them above others in their mental and physical abilities and in the provisions they receive. He does all this to test them, so that they may prove whether they are grateful or ungrateful to Him. Am I to seek a lord other than God when He is swift in retribution, and He is the One who grants grace and forgiveness to all those who repent of their misdeeds? Am I to seek a lord other than God so as to replace his law, orders and rulings for those of God, when I have all these indications, inspirations and evidence pointing to the truth of God being the only Lord of the universe? As we have said, these verses are a devotional prayer and a glorification of God's oneness, reflecting the splendid image of pure faith as God's Messenger (peace be upon him) feels it in his heart. It is an image the splendor of which cannot be expressed in human terms.

Now that the section is completed, if we look back at its great dimensions, the wide range it covers and the profound depths it goes into, we are overwhelmed. The section has taken us on a fascinating and breathtaking journey, to look at the great truths of existence. It is a journey that covers the major and fundamental Islamic concepts. It portrays the truth of Godhead in all its awesome glory, majesty, splendors and beauty. It holds in front of our eyes the truths of the universe, life and what lies beyond life which we cannot perceive with our limited faculties. It shows us the truth of God's will and how it initiates and obliterates, gives life and causes death, and runs the universe and all living things. It reflects the truth of the human soul: its depths, apparent and hidden pathways, desires and leanings, the guidance it follows and the errors it commits, how it reacts to the whispers of evil humans and jinn, as well as how it is led along the right or wrong way. It portrays scenes of the Day of Judgement, the gathering of all creatures, their moments of great distress and mo-

ments of hope and happiness. It gives us scenes of human history on earth, and shots of the history of life and the universe. The panorama it shows us is vast and extensive. We cannot sum it up in words. It can only be seen through the section itself, with its surpassing excellence and inimitable style of expression. No wonder it is part of this blessed book. *And it is He who made you as viceregents on the earth and exalted some of you above some others in degree that He try you with what He gave you. Truly, your Lord is Swift in repayment and He, truly, is Forgiving, Compassionate.* (6:165)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

Analyze as many of the statements that can be interpreted as if ... then statements in the section in order to practice implications or conclusions. Add your personal experiences where possible.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I am able to give reasons for my statements.
I am also able to develop alternative explanations.

LESSON 56(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ARGUMENTS AND INTERPRETATIONS

WHAT IS AN ARGUMENT?

Arguments differ from explanations. An explanation is also a series of statements, but the difference is that with an explanation, knowing the first statement is true. The statements that follow explain why the first statement is true. On the other hand, in the case of arguments, based on the series of statements or premises, you infer the conclusion.

Critical thinkers try to overlook their preconceptions when agreeing or disagreeing with a conclusion. They use tools of analysis to try to understand the reason behind the issue and to determine its relative strengths and weaknesses. One of the tools of analysis is to continue to ask for reasons and to consider other points of views. They pay special attention to possible strong arguments with which they disagree because they are aware of the tendency to ignore, oversimplify, distort or otherwise unfairly dismiss them. They analyze questions and place conflicting arguments and interpretations in opposition to one another as a means of highlighting key concepts, assumptions, implications, and so forth. When giving or being given an interpretation, students learn to recognize the difference between evidence and interpretation, explore the assumptions on which interpretations are based and propose and evaluate alternative interpretations for their relative strength. As autonomous thinkers, they consider competing theories and develop their own theories.

QURANIC CHAPTER 37: THE ONES STANDING IN RANK (AL-SAFFAT)

SIGNS 37:1-37:21

Makkah: *By the ones standing in ranks,*
ranged in rows (37:1)
then, ones who scare in a scaring (37:2)
then, ones who recount the Remembrance,(37:3)
truly, your God is One,(37:4)
the Lord of the heavens and the earth
and whatever is between them and the Lord of the sunrise.(37:5)
Truly, We made to appear pleasing
the present heaven with the adornment of the stars (37:6)
and keeping it safe from every emboldened Satan.(37:7)
They pay no attention to the lofty Council for they are hurled at
from every edge, rejected. (37:8)
And for them is a punishment,

that which lasts forever, (37:9)
but for him who snatched a fragment,
then, a piercing flame pursued him. (37:10)
So ask them for advice: Are they stronger in constitution
or those others whom We created?
Truly, We created them of clinging clay. (37:11)
Nay! You marveled while they deride. (37:12)
And when they were reminded, they remember not. (37:13)
And when they saw a sign, they scoff at it. (37:14)
And they said: This is not but clear sorcery. (37:15)
Is it when we were dead and had been earth dust and bones
that we will, truly, be ones who are raised up (37:16)
and our fathers, the ancient ones? (37:17)
Say: Yes, you will be ones in a state of lowliness. (37:18)
There will be only one Scare.
So when they will be looking on it, (37:19)
they will say: Woe to us! This is the Day of Judgment! (37:20)
This is the Day of Decision which you had been denying. (37:21)

COMMENTARY°

A SKY ADORNED WITH STARS

The section begins by mentioning three groups of people, identifying what they do. The first description may mean that they range themselves in rows as they pray, or range their wings, awaiting God' commands. The second group rebukes whoever deserves rebuke, perhaps at the time when the angels gather their souls when they die, or at the time of resurrection, or when they are driven into hell, or in any position or situation. The third group recite God's Wword, which may be the Quran or other scriptures or they may recite glorifications of God. They are mentioned in the form of an oath made by God confirming His Oneness: *truly, your God is One.* (37:4) As we have already stated, the occasion here is the mention of the superstition circulated in ignorant Arabia alleging that the angels were God's daughters, and as such, they too were deities.

God then mentions to His servants something about Himself that is suited to the truth of His Oneness: *The Lord of the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them and the Lord of the sunrise* (37:5) The heavens and the earth stand before us, speaking to us about the Creator who controls everything in this universe. No one else claims the ability to create and control the universe, and no one can deny that the One who created the universe is the true Lord who has absolute power. He also created and controls *whatever is between*

them, including the air, clouds, light, as well as tiny little creatures which we come to know from time to time, but much more remains unknown to us. It is impossible to look with an alert mind at the heavens and the earth and what is between them without being profoundly affected by the greatness, accuracy, variety, beauty, harmony and coherence between all these creatures. Only a dead heart can look at them without genuine interaction.

The translation of this sign: *The Lord of the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them and the Lord of the sunrise* (37:5) is far from adequate, as the sign not only refers to the rising of the sun, but of every star and planet. Each has its time and point of rising. Therefore, the number of such points in all the corners of the universe is beyond imagination. At the same time, the phrase refers to the fact that as the earth turns round the sun, every point of it has its own sunrise, and its point of sunset. Whenever a point of earth is facing the sun, it has its sunrise, and the opposite point on the surface of the earth has its sunset. People did not know this at the time of the revelation of the Quran, but God told them about it. This precise system that makes such successive sunrises over the earth, and the splendid beauty that so permeates our planet beckons us to reflect on the superb beauty of God's creation and to believe in His Oneness. How could such beauty, accuracy and consistency have been achieved unless the Maker is One?

This is the reason why this particular attribute of God's is mentioned on this occasion. We will see that there will be another occasion in the section which recalls the mention of the heavens and sunrises, as it refers to planets, flames, devils and their destruction. *Truly, We made to appear pleasing the present heaven with the adornment of the stars and keeping it safe from every emboldened Satan. They pay no attention to the lofty Council for they are hurled at from every edge, rejected. And for them is a punishment, that which lasts forever, but for him who snatched a fragment, then, a piercing flame pursued him.* (37:6-37:10)

At the outset, the section touches on the part of the superstition that relates to angels. Now it touches on the part that relates to the jinn. In pre-Quranic days, some Arabs alleged that the jinn were related to God. Indeed, some of them worshipped the jinn for this reason, and because they attributed to them knowledge of the world beyond human perception.

One look at the sky: *Truly, We made to appear pleasing the present heaven with the adornment of the stars* (37:6) is sufficient to realize that the element of beauty is purposely incorporated into the making of the universe: its very make up is beautiful, well propor-

tioned and harmonious. In fact, beauty is an essential part of its nature. Its design gives equal importance to beautiful appearance and perfect functioning. Therefore, everything in it is made according to an accurate measure, performing its role to perfection and adding to its overall beauty.

The sky and its stars is the most beautiful scene around us. We never tire of it. Every star and planet sends its flickering light. To look at these stars and planets as they change position night after night gives endless pleasure.

Another function of the stars and their satellites is also mentioned in the section, demonstrating how some of them are shooting stars and piercing flames that target the jinn, preventing them from getting close to those on high: *Truly, We made to appear pleasing the present heaven with the adornment of the stars and keeping it safe from every emboldened Satan. They pay no attention to the lofty Council for they are hurled at from every edge, rejected. And for them is a punishment, that which lasts forever, but for him who snatched a fragment, then, a piercing flame pursued him.* (37:7-37:10) This means that some of the shooting stars we see guard the skies against rebellious devils to prevent them from eavesdropping on those on high. Such satans on the Day of Judgment will be punished further. However, a rebellious devil might stealthily snatch something of what goes on among the angels on high, but as this devil descends, a piercing flame pursues and burns him.

RECEIVING THE MESSAGE WITH RIDICULE

The Prophet is then instructed to question them about whether they considered their own creation to be more difficult or the creation of the heavens, earth and all creation in the universe? If they agree that human creation is less difficult, why should they then disbelieve in resurrection, meeting it with derision and considering it impossible, when it is nothing compared to creating the universe?

The other created beings in this respect include the angels, heavens, the earth and all between them, the jinn, stars, planets and piercing flames. They acknowledge that these are created by God. No answer, however, is expected to the question. This is simply a rhetorical device inviting amazement at their lack of understanding of what is around them. It derides the way they look at things. Leaving the question unanswered, the section shows them the substance from which they were created in the first place: it is soft, sticky clay made of material from this earth, which is itself one of God's creatures: *So ask them for advice: Are they stronger in constitution or those others whom We created? Truly, We created them of clinging clay. Nay!* ***You***

had marveled while they deride. And when they were reminded, they remember not. And when they saw a sign, they scoff at it. And they said: This is not but clear sorcery. Is it when we were dead and had been earth dust and bones that we will, truly, be ones who are raised up and our fathers, the ancient ones? (37:11) It is abundantly clear then that they are not the more difficult to create. Therefore, their making fun of God's signs and His promise to bring them back to life is nothing less than absurd.

Their attitude makes the Prophet wonder: *Nay! You had marveled while they deride. And when they were reminded, they remember not. And when they saw a sign, they scoff at it.* (37:12-37:14) It is only right that the Prophet should wonder at them. A believer who recognizes God with all his faculties as Muhammad did, and who sees in full clarity the numerous signs in the universe pointing to Him, is bound to wonder and marvel at how people can remain oblivious to them. In short, how can they adopt such an attitude?

As the Prophet looked at them with amazement, they continued ridiculing the truth he presented to them, speaking of God's Oneness and their own resurrection. They preferred to remain blind, with their hearts sealed. Therefore, they scoffed at God's revelations and signs, wondered at the Prophet who presented these to them and made that the material for further ridicule. Part of this was how they described the Quran: *And they said: This is not but clear sorcery. Is it when we were dead and had been earth dust and bones that we will, truly, be ones who are raised up and our fathers, the ancient ones?* (37:15-37:17) They are oblivious to everything around them that reminds them of God's power and ability, claiming that He would not return them to life after they and their forefathers had died and perished. Yet such return is nothing to marvel at, if we would only look at the universe around us and see what God has created.

Since they would not reflect quietly and calmly on what they saw, they are strongly jolted such that they see their own agitated state in the life to come: *Say: Yes, you will be ones in a state of lowliness.* (37:18) Yes, indeed, you and your forefathers will be resurrected and utterly humiliated, unable to put up any opposition. It is not merely that God emphatically confirms their resurrection, but He shows them how it is done. This is depicted in a long scene describing resurrection in different ways, presenting lively images and successive movements. The whole account employs the narrative style first, then changes to dialogue, and in between they see events and actions and hear comments on these. Thus, the whole scene comes alive.

There will be only one Scare (37:19) is all just a glimpse, taking

no more than a single cry, which is described in Arabic as *zajrah*, to indicate that it is exceedingly strong and coming from a superior source. This single cry is made *so when they will be looking on it,* suddenly, without any preparation. Surprised so violently, they cry out: *They will say: Woe to us! This is the Day of Judgment!* (37:20) In the midst of their shock, a voice will unexpectedly make it clear that whatever happens to them is through their own making: *his is the Day of Decision which you had been denying.* (37:21) Here we see how the section changes its style from the narrative to directly address those who used to deny that there would ever be such a day when all humanity would be resurrected and their fate determined.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC THINKING WORKS

What is the conclusion to the arguments in these verses? What are its relative strengths? Are there any weaknesses? Are there any arguments you disagree with?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confi dent you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to use specific analytic techniques, such as making assumptions explicit and evaluating them.
I was able to clarify issues, conclusions, values, and words.
I was able to develop criteria for evaluation.

LESSON 56(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY

RECOGNIZING CONTRADICTIONS

We have seen the Quranic sign that claims one of the proofs of its divine origin is the question of contradictions. A human created document would contain many contradictions while the Quran does not. The Quranic style is one of harmony and consistency.

Whereas there are no contradictions in the Quran and its signs, there are man-made contradictions that arise from the interpretation of some of the verses, in particular, 4:34.

Consistency is a fundamental—some would say the defining—ideal of critical thinkers. They strive to remove contradictions from their beliefs, and are wary of contradictions in others. As would-be fair-minded thinkers they strive to judge like-cases in a like-manner. Perhaps the most difficult form of consistency to achieve is that between word and deed. Self-serving double standards are one of the most common problems in human life. Children are in some sense aware of the importance of consistency when they ask their parents: Why don't I get to do what they get to do? They are frustrated by double standards, yet are given little help in getting insight into them and dealing with them. Critical thinkers can pinpoint specifically where opposing arguments or views contradict each other, distinguishing the contradictions from compatible beliefs, thus focussing their analyses of conflicting views.

The most conclusive arguments in Islamic tradition to prove or disprove something is to use the Quran to prove another point in the Quran. Using this method, we get to the heart of the main reason why the word "beat" causes a man-made contradiction in the Quran.

We begin with two premises: Islam encourages marriage and discourages divorce. The Prophet said: Marriage is half of faith. He also said: Divorce is deplorable.

Here we present two different translations of Quranic signs for a classroom discussion. The Quranic message and Islam, in general, encourages marriage and discourages divorce. The students can discuss their views on the two different versions and if they interpret a contradiction between the signs 4:34 and 2:231.

Men are supporters of wives because God gave some of them an advantage over others and because they spent of their wealth. So the females, ones in accord with morality, are the females,ones who are morally obligated and the females, ones who guard the unseen of what God kept safe. And those females whose resistance you fear, then admonish them (f) and abandon them (f) in their sleeping places and go away from them (f). Then if they (f) obeyed you, then look not for any way against them (f). Truly, God had been Lofty, Great. (4:34, *The Sublime Quran*)

Men are upholders and maintainers of women by virtue of that in which God has favored some of them above others and by virtue of their spending from their wealth. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient, guarding in (their husband's) absence what God has guarded. As for those from whom you fear discord and animosity, admonish them, then leave them in their beds, then strike them. Then if they obey you, seek not a way against them. Truly God is Exalted, Great. (4:34, *The Study Quran)*

When you divorced wives, and they (f) reached their (f) term, then, hold them (f) back as one who is honorable or set them (f) free as one who is honorable. But hold them (f) not back by injuring them so that you commit aggression. And whoever commits that, then, surely, he did wrong himself. And take not to yourselves the signs of God in mockery. Remember the divine blessing of God on you, and what He caused to descend to you from the Book and wisdom. He admonishes you with it. And be Godfearing of God and know that God is Knowing of everything. (2:231, *The Sublime Quran*)

When you have divorced women and they have fulfilled their term, keep them honorably or release them honorably, and do not keep them so as to cause harm and thus transgress. Whosoever does that surely wrongs himself. And do not take God's sings in mockery, and remember God's Blessing upon you, and what He sent down to you of the Book and Wisdom, exhorting you thereby. And reverence God, and know that God is Knower of all things. (2:231, *The Study Quran*)

For the Muslim, the Prophet is the living Quran; that is, he practiced ex actly whatever God revealed in the Quran. If it was a command to good sucl as fasting, daily formal prayer, pilgrimage, purifying alms, charity, he performed these commands. If it was to prevent a wrong like drinking alcohol, gambling or eating pork, he refrained from these things. As the living Quran, the life, behavior and sayings of the Prophet serve as a model for all Muslims.

As the Quran refers to the Prophet as a mercy to humanity and the model whose example should be followed, it is clear that he would have carried out any and all of the commands (imperative forms of the verb) in the Quran that related to his life (there are commands specific to other Prophets as well) yet we find an exception in *daraba* according to the interpreters over the centuries.

In regard to 4:34 and the use of *daraba* in the imperative form allowing husbands to "strike, beat, hit, chastise or spank" a *nushuz* wife, in all of the canonical works there is no reference to Prophet Muhammad, peace and the mercy of God be upon him, having ever beaten women.

We read in 2:231: *When you divorce wives, and they (f) are about to reach their (f) term, then hold them (f) back honorably or set them (f) free honorably;*

but hold them (f) not back by injuring them so that you commit aggression. (2:231)

In other words, the Quran is telling husbands not to harm their wives whom they want to set free, not to hold them back by injuring them. The word "injuring" (*dirar*) also means hurt, harm, use force or commit aggression.

Let's take an example. A Muslim wife, after many attempts to help her husband manage his in- appropriate anger, anger that most often is taken out against her, tells her husband that she agrees to a divorce. He, in his anger, does not at that moment remember that according to 2:231 he is not to hold back by injuring a wife he wants to divorce, and instead, being both judge and jury, beats her as erroneously as supposedly allowed in 4:34. The battered wife, becoming the victim of his anger, is then afraid to speak out again as this last instance has caused her to seek refuge in a shelter for battered women.

Therefore, we see a contradiction between 4:34 and 2:231. Jurists have created a contradiction that is not in the Quran by encouraging divorce and discouraging marriage so that we can conclude, a Muslim woman who is to be divorced must be set free without injuring, hurting, or using force against her, but a Muslim woman who wants to remain married does do under the threat of being beaten!

Does this make sense? 4:34 as presently interpreted contradicts 2:231. How can we eliminate this contradiction? There is a very simple solution: Revert the interpretation back to how the Prophet understood it through his behavior. so that *daraba* here is understood to mean "go away."

Another example from the Quran as to why the word daraba in 4:34 creates a man-made contradiction. 24:6-24:9 states: *And those who accuse their wives—and there are no witnesses but themselves—let the testimony of one of them be four testimonies sworn to God that he is among ones who are sincere and a fifth that the curse of God be on him if he has been the one who lies. And it will drive off the punishment from her if she bears witness with four testimonies sworn to God that he is the one who lies, and the fifth, that the anger of God be on her if he has been among the ones who are sincere.*

The oaths of the wife prevail and punishment is averted from her. Therefore, she is not to be "beaten" by her husband. She is allowed to defend herself against any accusation he may have against her.

Now let us imagine the same situation as we did with 4:34. Before a wife has a chance to take advantage of her right given in the Quran in 24:6-24:9, her husband accuses her of flirting with another man without witnesses other than himself and beats her. She becomes a victim, perhaps ending up in a shelter. Now, a victim, she no longer has the will to defend herself and instead assumes that she is in the wrong and deserves to be beaten whether she has done anything wrong or not.

Thus a contradiction is created that is not in the Quran itself by interpreting *daraba* to mean "beat" instead of "go away" or "leave." The reality is that

a wife who is to be divorced cannot be harmed. This protects a wife who wants to be set free. This is a right she is given in the Quran—not to be injured! When *daraba* is interpreted as beat, this reality becomes a myth.

It is a reality that 24:6-24:9 allows a wife who is accused by her husband without any witnesses other than himself to defend herself against the accusation and God and humanity accepts her defense, but because of a man-made contradiction of 4:34 and not following the behavior of the Prophet, the best model for humanity.

As critical thinkers, we immediately see a contradiction, not in the source itself, but in the way some husbands unjustly make themselves both judge and jury thereby allowing themselves to misinterpret God's Word.

QURANIC CHAPTER 37: THE ONES STANDING IN RANKS (AL-SAFFAT)

SIGNS 37:22-37:74

Makkah: *Assemble those who did wrong*
and their spouses,
and what they had been worshipping (37:22)
—other than God—and guide them to the path to hellfire. (37:23)
And stop them for they are ones who will be asked: (37:24)
What is the matter with you
that you help not one another? (37:25)
Nay! They are on that Day
ones who will resign themselves to submission to God. (37:26)
And some of them came forward to some others,
demanding of one another. (37:27)
They would say:
Truly, you, you had been approaching us from the right. (37:28)
They would say: Nay! You are not ones who believe (37:29)
and we had not been any authority over you.
Nay! You had been a folk, ones who are defiant. (37:30)
So the saying was realized against us of our Lord.
That, truly, we are ones who experience the punishment. (37:31)
So we led you into error.
Truly, we had been ones who are in error. (37:32)
Then, truly, they will be on that Day
ones who are partners in the punishment. (37:33)
We accomplish, thus, with the ones who sin. (37:34)
Truly, when it had been said to them:
There is no god but God, they grow arrogant. (37:35)
And they said: Are we ones who leave our gods
for a possessed poet? (37:36)

Nay! He drew near with The Truth
and he established as true the ones who are sent. (37:37)
Truly, you are ones who will experience
the painful punishment (37:38)
and you will be given recompense
but for what you had been doing. (37:39)
But the devoted servants of God, (37:40)
those, for them was a known provision (37:41)
—sweet fruits—and they will be ones who are honored (37:42)
in the Gardens of Bliss, (37:43)
on couches—ones who face one another. (37:44)
A cup from a spring of water will be passed around, (37:45)
white, a delight to ones who drink it. (37:46)
In that is neither headache, nor are they intoxicated by it. (37:47)
And with them are ones who are restraining
their (f) glance, lovely eyed (37:48)
as if they are well-guarded pearls. (37:49)
So some of them will come forward to some others,
demanding of one another. (37:50)
One of them who consigns would say:
Truly, I had a comrade (37:51)
who would say: Are you of the ones
who establish the Resurrection as true? (37:52)
When we are dead and had been earth dust and bones,
will we be ones who are judged? (37:53)
He said: Will you be ones who peruse? (37:54)
So he perused and saw him amidst hellfire. (37:55)
He said: By God, you were about to deal me destruction! (37:56)
Had it not been for the divine blessing of my Lord
I would have been of the ones who are charged. (37:57)
Are we not, then, to be dead again (37:58)
but for our first death and will we not be
ones who are punished? (37:59)
Truly, this, it is the winning the sublime triumph. (37:60)
For the like of this, let the ones who work, work. (37:61)
Is this better as hospitality or the tree of Zaqqum? (37:62)
Truly, We made it a test for the ones who are unjust. (37:63)
Truly, it is a tree that goes forth, its root in hellfire, (37:64)
its spathes have been like the heads of satans. (37:65)
So, truly, they, they are ones who eat from it,
ones who fill their bellies with it. (37:66)
Again, truly, on top of that for them
is a brew of scalding water. (37:67)

Again, truly, their return is to hellfire. (37:68)
They discovered their fathers ones who go astray, (37:69)
yet they are running in their footsteps. (37:70)
And, certainly, went astray
most of the ancient ones before them. (37:71)
And, certainly, We sent among them ones who warn. (37:72)
Then, look on how had been the Ultimate End
of the ones who are warned, (37:73)
but the devoted servants of God. (37:74)

COMMENTARY°

It takes only one decisive sentence of blame before the orders are issued to those whose task it is to carry them out: (37:22-37:24) So the wrongdoers and their like are to be gathered together. Although the order is clear and decisive, it also carries much sarcasm in the expression, 'guide them all to the path of hell'.This is certainly a strange type of guidance, worse than going astray. Yet it is the perfect retort to their straying from the path of divine guidance. Since they did not benefit in this present world from guidance to the straight path, guidance will be given to them in the life to come, but this time to the path of hell.

Having been given such guidance, we then see them halted for questioning. Again the address turns to them with blame, even though it is delivered through a simple and innocent question: *What is the matter with you that you help not one another?* (37:25) Why do you not support one another when you are all here and in need of any help you can get? You also have here with you the deities you used to worship. Needless to say, none of them ventures an answer. What follows this rhetorical questioning is a comment describing their condition: *Nay! They are on that Day ones who will resign themselves to submission to God.* (37:26) Both the worshippers and the worshipped are in a state of complete submission to God.

Once more, the section picks up the narrative style, portraying them as they argue with one another: (37:27-37:28) This describes the normal condition of whispering, coming from the right. Thus, they blame the whisperers, saying they are responsible for their present ordeal. Those accused will immediately deny responsibility, putting it squarely on their accusers: *They would say: Nay! You are not ones who believe.* (37:29) It was not our whisper that took you from faith into disbelief.

You were not following guidance and we led you astray by whispering. *And we had not been any authority over you.* (37:30) We could not impose our views on you, forcing you to follow us against

your will: *Nay! You had been a folk, ones who are defiant.* (37:30) You would not abide by any limit.*So the saying was realized against us of our Lord. That, truly, we are ones who experience the punishment.* (37:31) Both you and us are in the same position, deserving of God's punishment for not heeding the warnings. You joined us because of your propensity to follow error. We did nothing to you, instead you followed us in our error: *So we led you into error. Truly, we had been ones who are in error.* (37:32)

At this point, another comment is made, but this time it sounds like a sentence announced before all, making its grounds clear and revealing what they did in this world to bring about their condemnation in the next: (37:33-37:36) A further comment carries clear censure of those who say such monstrous words: (37:37-37:40)

Since God's true servants are mentioned here, making it clear that they will not suffer, their condition on the Day of Judgement is also shown. Once more this comes in narrative style, describing the happiness and bliss they will enjoy to the full and contrasting it with the suffering the other party endures: (37:41-49)

This is happiness pure and perfect, combining all that is enjoyable, physically and spiritually. Everyone finds in it whatever they want of happiness. To start with, the people enjoying this happiness are God's true servants, a description that signifies they are held in high regard. They are also 'honored' among those on high, and this is the highest honor. They have 'fruit' and they sit 'on soft couches facing one another.' They will be served so that they need not exert any effort for anything. What they drink is also described in detail: (37:45-37:47) These are the best qualities in any drink, giving the pleasure without negative consequences. Thus they do not fear that it will he used up, and it gives them no unpleasant side effects. They have companions who are described as follows: *And with them are ones who are restraining their (f) glance, lovely eyed.* (37:48) Their modesty means that they do not look up to anyone other than their mates, despite being very pretty. They are chaste and gentle, untouched by anyone.

As the story unfolds we see these true servants of God engaged in pleasant conversation, recalling things from their past lives and looking at what they now enjoy. This image contrasts with the contentious arguments the others have in their place of suffering. One of the believers then relates to his brethren something that he recalls from his first life: (37:51-37:53) His friend did not believe in the Day of Judgment, and he asked him in amazement whether he truly believed in resurrection after death. As he is speaking about his friend, this believer wishes to know what happened to him. He looks for

him and calls on his brothers to look as well: He adds: *Will you be ones who peruse? So he perused and saw him amidst hellfire.* (37:54-37:55)

When he sees him in his suffering, he turns to him and says: *He said: By God, you were about to deal me destruction! Had it not been for the divine blessing of my Lord I would have been of the ones who are charged.* (37:56-37:57) I could have ended up in the same position and been driven with the herd to the same position you now are in.

His awareness of what happened to his friend makes him feel more acutely the great blessing he and his fellow believers are experiencing. Therefore, he wants to assert it and be reassured that it will last: *Are we not, then, to be dead again but for our first death and will we not be ones who are punished? Truly, this, it is the winning the sublime triumph.* (37:58-37:60)

A short comment is made here, alerting hearts to the need to work hard in order to achieve such a goal.*For the like of this, let the ones who work, work.* (37:61) The goal is a pure and everlasting happiness that cannot be ended by death or prevented by torture. It is the type of goal that deserves hard effort. Compared to this, other goals people strive for seem worthless.

In order to highlight the great gulf between this everlasting, pure happiness and the other destiny awaiting the ungrateful, the section explains what awaits the latter after they have been held to account:

Is this the better welcome, or the *Zaqqum* tree? We have made it a test for the wrongdoers. It is a tree that grows in the very heart of the blazing fire of hell. Its fruit is like devils' heads. They will indeed eat of it, filling their bellies. Then on top of it, they will be given polluted scalding water to drink. Then again, their ultimate goal is hell. (37:62-37:68)

Rhetorically they are asked whether the pure endless bliss is a better position and place or the Zaqqum tree. What is this tree, then? The answer is simple: *Truly, it is a tree that goes forth, its root in hellfire, its spathes have been like the heads of satans.* (37:64-37:65) Needless to say, people do not know how devils' heads look. Nevertheless, it is a frightening image. It is sufficient only to think of these heads to be scared. How, then, would they countenance the prospect of these very heads becoming the food with which they fill their bellies?

God made this tree a test for the wrongdoers. When they heard its name, they made fun of it, saying: 'How could a tree grow in hell without being burnt?' One of them, Abu Jahl, said in sarcasm: "People of the Quraysh! Do you know what the *zaqqum* tree is that

Muhammad holds up to scare you with? It is the dates of Madinah cooked with butter. Should we get it, we will swallow it without hesitation."

The fact is, however, that the *zaqqum* tree was something different from the food they knew: *So, truly, they, they are ones who eat from it, ones who fill their bellies with it.* (37:66) When it stings their throats and burns their bellies—as it grows in the fire it is of the same substance—they will look for a cool drink to stop the burning. However, they will only drink contaminated, boiling water: *Again, truly, on top of that for them is a brew of scalding water.* (37:67)

After this meal, they leave the table to return to their permanent abode, which is far from welcoming: *Again, truly, their return is to hellfire.* (37:68)

They found their forefathers astray, and rushed to follow in their footsteps. Most of the people of old went astray before them; although We had sent them warners. Behold what happened in the end to those that had been warned. Not so God's true servants. *They discovered their fathers ones who go astray, yet they are running in their footsteps. And, certainly, went astray most of the ancient ones before them. And, certainly, We sent among them ones who warn. Then, look on how had been the Ultimate End of the ones who are warned, but the devoted servants of God.* (37:69-37:74)

These people are hardened in following error, but at the same time they are simply following the footsteps of others, without thinking or reflection. They rush to follow their fathers' lead taking no opportunity to question or examine: *They discovered their fathers ones who go astray, yet they are running in their footsteps.* (37:69-37:70) Both they and their fathers are examples of going astray, which was also the case of the majority of earlier communities: *And, certainly, went astray most of the ancient ones before them.* (37:71) Yet they did receive warnings, but paid no heed: *And, certainly, We sent among them ones who warn.* (37:72) What did this lead to in the end? What was the outcome of the ungrateful' attitude, as compared with the outcome of heeding the warnings and accepting the faith? This is shown in the stories that follow. The signs that ensue serve as a mere announcement of what is to come: *Then, look on how had been the Ultimate End of the ones who are warned, but the devoted servants of God.*(37:73-37:74)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC THINKING WORKS

When arguing opposing views, students should be encouraged to find points of agreement and specify points of dispute or contradiction.

What do the different translations of 4:34 and 2:231 say?
Are the two consistent or contradictory?
Why do you say so?
What behavior would have been consistent with their words?
What words would have been consistent with their behavior?
Do 4:34 and 2:231 contradict each other when darab is interpreted as "beat," spank," or any other similar synonym?
What does each sign (4:34 and 2:231) say?
Could both views be true?
Why or why not? If one is true, must the other be false?
Where, exactly, do these views contradict each other?
On what do they agree?
What is it about that view that you think is false?
Do you accept this claim? That one?
On what question does your disagreement turn?
What, exactly, is it in this view that you doubt or disagree with?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to explore possible ways to reconcile apparent contradictions.
Could someone hold both of these views?
How might someone argue that someone can believe both?

LESSON 56(3). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
NOTING SIGNIFICANT SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

Quranic critical thinkers try to treat things that are similar in a similar way and things that are different in a different way. Uncritical thinkers tend not to see the significant similarities and differences. It often is the case that things that appear to be superficially similar are often significantly different and things that appear to be superficially different are often essentially the same. It takes practice to be able to distinguish between the two. As this sensitivity develops, it influences how students experience, how they describe, how they categorize, and how they reason about things. They become more careful and discriminating in their use of words and phrases. They hesitate before they accept this or that analogy or comparison between 4:34 and 2:231 as the previous lesson showed. They recognize the purposes of the comparisons they make. They recognize that purposes govern noting significant similarities and differences.

QURANIC CHAPTER 37: THE ONES STANDING IN RANKS (AL-SAFFAT)
SIGNS 37:75-37:113

Makkah: Book 25: Noah (37:75)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (37:76)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (37:77)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (37:78)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (37:79)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (37:80)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (37:81)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (37:82)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:83)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:84)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:85)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:86)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:87)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:88)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:89)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:90)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:91)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:92)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:93)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:94)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:95)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:96)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:97)

Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:98)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:99)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:100)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:101)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:102)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:103)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:104)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:105)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:106)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:107)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:108)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:109)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:110)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:111)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:112)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (37:113)

QURANIC CHAPTER 37: THE ONES STANDING IN RANKS (AL-SAFFAT)

SIGNS 37:114-37:138

Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Aaron (37:114)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Aaron (37:115)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Aaron (37:116)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Aaron (37:117)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Aaron (37:118)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Aaron (37:119)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Aaron (37:120)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Aaron (37:121)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Aaron (37:122)
Makkah: Book 28: Elias (Ilyas, Elijah) (37:123)
Makkah: Book 28: Elias (Ilyas, Elijah) (37:124)
Makkah: Book 28: Elias (Ilyas, Elijah) (37:125)
Makkah: Book 28: Elias (Ilyas, Elijah) (37:126)
Makkah: Book 28: Elias (Ilyas, Elijah) (37:127)
Makkah: Book 28: Elias (Ilyas, Elijah) (37:128)
Makkah: Book 28: Elias (Ilyas, Elijah) (37:129)
Makkah: Book 28: Elias (Ilyas, Elijah) (37:130)
Makkah: Book 28: Elias (Ilyas, Elijah) (37:131)
Makkah: Book 28: Elias (Ilyas, Elijah) (37:132)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (37:133)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (37:134)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (37:135)

Makkah: Book 26: Lot (37:136)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (37:137)
Makkah: Book 26: Lot (37:138)

QURANIC CHAPTER 37: THE ONES STANDING IN RANKS (AL-SAFFAT)

SIGNS 37:139-37:182

Makkah: Book 28: Jonah (Yunus) (37:139)
Makkah: Book 28: Jonah (Yunus) (37:140)
Makkah: Book 28: Jonah (Yunus) (37:141)
Makkah: Book 28: Jonah (Yunus) (37:142)
Makkah: Book 28: Jonah (Yunus) (37:143)
Makkah: Book 28: Jonah (Yunus) (37:144)
Makkah: Book 28: Jonah (Yunus) (37:145)
Makkah: Book 28: Jonah (Yunus) (37:146)
Makkah: Book 28: Jonah (Yunus) (37:147)
Makkah: Book 28: Jonah (Yunus) (37:148)

Then, ask them for advice:
*Are daughters for **your** Lord and for them, sons?* (37:149)
Or created We female angels
while they were ones who bear witness? (37:150)
Truly, it is out of their calumny that they say: (37:151)
God procreated! And, truly, they are ones who lie. (37:152)
Favored He daughters over sons? (37:153)
What is the matter with you? How you give judgment! (37:154)
Will you not, then, recollect? (37:155)
Or is there for you a clear authority? (37:156)
Then, bring your Book
if you would be ones who are sincere. (37:157)
And they made kindred between him and between the genies.
But, surely, the genies knew well
that they were ones who will be charged. (37:158)
Glory be to God from what they allege, (37:159)
but not the devoted servants of God. (37:160)
So, truly, you and those whom you worship (37:161)
will not be ones who are tempters against Him, (37:162)
but he who would be one who roasts in hellfire. (37:163)
There is not any of us but he has a known station. (37:164)
And we are ones who are standing in ranks. (37:165)
And we are the ones who glorify. (37:166)
And, truly, they had been saying: (37:167)
Had there been with us a Remembrance

from the ancient ones, (37:168)
we would have been servants of God,
ones who are devoted, (37:169)
but they were ungrateful for it. and soon they will know. (37:170)
And, certainly, Our Word preceded for Our servants,
the ones who are sent. (37:171)
They, truly, they are ones who shall be helped. (37:172)
And, truly, Our armies are the ones who are victors. (37:173)
*So turn **you** away from them for awhile* (37:174)
and perceive them and soon they will perceive. (37:175)
Are they impatient for Our punishment? (37:176)
Then, when it would come down into their courtyard,
how evil will be the morning daybreak
of the ones who are warned! (37:177)
*So turn **you** away from them for awhile,* (37:178)
and perceive and they will perceive. (37:179)
*Glory be to **your** Lord, the Lord of Great Glory,*
from what they allege about Him. (37:180)
And peace be to the ones who are sent. (37:181)
And The Praise belongs to God, the Lord of the worlds! (37:182)

COMMENTARY°

SUPERSTITIOUS BELIEFS

The section uses every means to refute the claims of the ungrateful; it shows their false superstition for what it is, draws its argument on the basis of their own logic and how it works in their own environment. They used to prefer boys to girls, considering the birth of a girl something of a tragedy. Yet they allege at the same time that the angels were female and that they were God's daughters. Therefore, the section takes up the argument, using their own standards to show how stupid their claims were: *Then, ask them for advice: Are daughters for **your** Lord and for them, sons?* (37:149) If females are of a lesser rank, how could they assign daughters to their Lord and keep sons for themselves? Or was it that He chose for Himself daughters and gave them sons? Neither possibility stands to reason. The Prophet is instructed to question them about this worthless claim. He is also to ask them about the source of the superstition and how it came about. In other words, where did they get the idea that the angels were females? Did they witness their creation in order to know their sex? *Or created We female angels while they were ones who bear witness?* (37:150)

The section gives the exact wording of their fabricated lies about

God: *Truly, it is out of their calumny that they say: God procreated! And, truly, they are ones who lie.* (37:151-37:152) They are liars even according to their own tradition which prefers sons to daughters. How could it be, then, that God would choose daughters for Himself? *Favored He daughters over sons?* (37:153) It wonders at their judgment which ignores their own logic: *How you give judgment! Will you not, then, recollect?* (37:154-37:155) Where do you get the evidence on which you base your judgment? *Or is there for you a clear authority? Then, bring your Book if you would be ones who are sincere.* (37:156-37:157)

The section moves on to refute the other superstition which alleged that some relationship existed between God and the jinn: *And they made kindred between him and between the genies. But, surely, the genies knew well that they were ones who will be charged.* (37:158) The allegation being that the angels were God's daughters born to Him by the jinn! The ungrateful claimed that this is how the relation started. The jinn, however, know for certain that they are created by God, like all other creation, and they also know that they will be brought before Him for judgment. Had they been related to Him, they would be due different treatment.

God places Himself far above this worthless fabrication: *Glory be to God from what they allege.* (37:159) He also makes clear that the believers among the jinn would not be driven to suffer their punishment. *But not the devoted servants of God.* (37:160)

The section then quotes an address made to the idolaters, their alleged deities and their deviant beliefs. Apparently, the address is made by the angels: *So, truly, you and those whom you worship will not be ones who are tempters against Him, but he who would be one who roasts in hellfire. There is not any of us but he has a known station. And we are ones who are standing in ranks. And we are the ones who glorify.* (37:161-37:166)

What this address means is that neither the ungrateful, nor the deities they worship could turn anyone away from God's path except one who is considered to belong to the people of hell and destined for it. They cannot lead astray a believer who is God's obedient servant. Hell has its own people who are of a known type. These respond to temptations and listen to those who try to lead them astray.

The angels also refute this superstition, making it clear that each one of them has his own position which he does not exceed. They are a type of God's creation who worship Him alone. They are assigned certain tasks and they fulfil them, ranging themselves in rows for prayer and extolling God's glory.

AN UNFAILING PROMISE

The section then speaks about the idolaters who circulate such superstitions, mentioning the promises they made when they envied the people of earlier revelations for receiving such messages. They used to say that had they had some sort of traditional beliefs inherited from Abraham or later prophets, they would have had a degree of faith that would have enhanced their position with God: *And, truly, they had been saying: Had been with us a Remembrance from the ancient ones, we would have been servants of God, ones who are devoted,* (37:167-37:169) Yet when they received the best revelations ever bestowed from on high, they turned away and forgot their promises: *But they were ungrateful for it. and soon they will know.* (37:170) The sign carries an implicit threat, which is suitable for those who persist in disbelief, going back on expressed wishes and promises: *Soon they will know.*

At this point the section states God's promise to His messengers of His assured help. In this way victory is assured them: *And, certainly, Our Word preceded for Our servants, the ones who are sent. They, truly, they are ones who shall be helped. And, truly, Our armies are the ones who are victors.* (37:171-37:173)

God's word has gone forth, and His promise has been given by His will. His Word will take effect without fail: *And, certainly, Our Word preceded for Our servants, the ones who are sent. They, truly, they are ones who shall be helped. And, truly, Our armies are the ones who are victors.* (37:171-37:173)

When this true promise has been declared, God orders His Messenger to turn away from the ungrateful, leaving them to God's Word to take effect. He should, however, watch them as the Word proves true, for they will see with their own eyes how this comes about:

*So turn **you** away from them for awhile and perceive them and soon they will perceive. Are they impatient for Our punishment? Then, when it would come down into their courtyard, how evil will be the morning daybreak of the ones who are warned! So turn **you** away from them for awhile, and perceive and they will perceive.*(37:174-37:179) The Prophet is told to leave them alone and not care for them. He is further told to wait for the day when he and they will see what God's promise means for him and them. If they hasten His punishment, they will suffer greatly when it falls upon them. Should this strike a community, they will have got what is certain to grieve them. Again, the Prophet is told to abandon them to their fate. This order implies further warning to them, and again the section advises that the outcome will be terrible: *So turn **you** away from them for awhile, and perceive and they will perceive.* (37:178-

179) What will happen is left unspecified, implying great terror.

The chapter concludes with extolling God's glory, stating that all might belongs to Him alone. It adds the blessing and greeting of peace to God's messengers, and declares that all praise is due to God, the Lord of all, who has no partners whatsoever: *Glory be to your Lord, the Lord of Great Glory, from what they allege about Him. And peace be to the ones who are sent. And The Praise belongs to God, the Lord of the worlds!* (37:180-37:182) It is indeed a fitting ending that sums up the main issues discussed in the chapter as a whole.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC THINKING WORKS

What similarities and differences do the Quranic verses point out between the practice of the early Quraysh and the Quranic message?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I tried using writing as a way to learn by writing summaries in my own words of important points from the Quranic signs here.

I was able to formulate test questions.

I wrote out answers to my own questions.

Appendix 1: Correlation between the Present Order of Chapters in the Quran and their Chronological Order

1 = 96
2 = 68
3 = 73
4 = 74
5 = 1
6 = 111
7 = 81
8 = 87
9 = 92
10 = 89
11 = 93
12 = 94
13 = 103
14 = 100
15 = 108
16 = 102
17 = 107
18 = 109
19 = 105
20 = 113
21 = 114
22 = 112
23 = 53
24 = 80
25 = 97
26 = 91
27 = 85
28 =95
29 = 106
30 = 101
31 = 75
32 = 104
33 = 77
34 = 50
35 = 90
36 = 86
37 = 54
38 = 38
39 = 7
40 = 72
41 = 36
42 = 25
43 = 35
44 = 19
45 = 20
46 = 56
47 = 26
48 = 27
49 = 28
50 = 17
51 = 10
52 = 11
53 = 12
54 = 15
55 = 6
56 = 37
57 = 31
57 = 34
59 = 39
60 = 40
61 = 41
62 = 42
63 = 43
64 = 44
65 = 45
66 = 46
67 = 51
68 = 88
69 = 18
70 = 16
71 = 71
72 = 14
73 = 21
74 = 23
75 = 32
76 = 52
77 = 67
78 = 69
79 = 70
80 = 78
81 = 79
82 = 82
83 = 84
84 = 30
85 = 29
86 = 83
87 = 2
88 = 8
89 = 3
90 = 33
91 = 60
92 = 4
93 = 99
94 = 57
95 = 47
96 = 13
97 = 55
98 = 76
99 = 65
100 = 78
101 = 59
102 = 24
103 = 22
104 = 63
105 = 58
106 = 49
107 = 66
108 = 64
109 = 61
110 = 62
111 = 48
112 = 5
113 = 9
114 = 110

NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION TO QURANIC THINKING BY HASHIM KAMALI

1. The rough equation that earlier Muslim scholars drew between the Islamic and Western conceptions of reason tended to be oblivious of the categories of reason and the Western critique of reason that divided it into "instrumental reason, critical reason, functional reason, abstract reason, imperialist reason, decentering reason" and the like. For details see Abdelwahab M. Elmessiri, "Features of the New Islamic Discourse," a Cairo conference paper, 1997: http:// www.21stcenturytrust.org/messiri.doc.

2. Some commentators have distinguished a total of 30 expressions that revolve around thinking over the *ayat*. See Abu Bakr al-Razi, *Tafsir al-Kabir* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1985), II, 222f.

3. Cf Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-'Ilm fi'l-Quran al-Karim* (Cairo: Maktaba Wahba, 1416/1996), 36.

4. Al-Isfahani, *Mufradat Alfaz al-Qur'an*, under "*Fikr*".

5. Cf., Karim Douglas Crow, "Islam and Reason" in *Al-Shajarah*, vol. 8, (2003),120-1.

6. Abbas Mahmud, "al-Agqad, Al-Tafkir Faridah Islamiyyah" (Thinking is an Islamic Obligation) quoted in Jamal Badi and Mustapha Tajdin, *Creative Thinking: An Islamic Perspective*, 2nd edn. (Kuala Lumpur: International Islamic University Malaysia, 2005), 6.

7. Cf. al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-'Ilm*, 41-45 quoting ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's *Miftah Dar al-Sa'ada*, and 'Agqad's book entitled *al-Tafkir Faridah Islamiyya* (Beirut: al-Matba'a al-'Asriyya, 1992).

8. Cf. al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-Ilm*, 200.

9. Cf .Ibid., 202.

10. Al-Raghib al-Isfahani, *Mufradat Alfaz al-Quran* (Beirut: Dar al-Shamiyya, 1383/1964), 249.

11. Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i, *al-Mizan fi-Tafsir al-Quran* (Beirut: al-Mu'assasa al-'Alami, 1383/1964) II, 395.

12. Ala uddin al-Mattagi al-Hindi, *Kanz al-Ummah fi Sunan al-Aqwal wa'l-Af'al* (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risalah, 1383/1981), hadith no. 5873.

13. Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali, *Risalat al-Radd 'ala al-Laduniyya*, ed. 'Abd Allah Riyad Mustafa, (Damascus: Dar al-Hikma, 1986), 241.

14. CE Ahmad Fu'ad al-Ahwani, *al-Tarbiyah fi'l-Islam* (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif bi-Misr, 1968), 227-228.

15. Cf. Aziz al-Azmeh, *Arabic Thought and Islamic Societies* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 109.

16. Cf. Diane F. Halpern, *Thought and Knowledge: An Introduction to Critical Thinking* (Mahwah: New Jersey, Lawrence Erlbaum and Associates, 1996), 21.

17. Cf. Ibrahim B. Syed, "Critical Thinking" as online at http://www.lrfi. org/articles/articles_101_150/critical_thinking.htm.

(18. Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Lahore: Shah Muhammad Ashraf, reprint 1982), 127.

19. Malik Bin Nabi, *Intaj al-Mustashriqin* (Cairo: Maktabah 'Amir, 1990), 34.

20. Iqbal, op. cit., 139.

21. See for details Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, *What's Right with Islam is What's*

Right with America (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2004), 4-5.

22. Georg W. H. Hegel, *Philosophy of History* (New York: Dove Books, 1956), 109.

23. Louay Safi, "The Creative Mission of the Muslim Minorities in the West: Synthesizing the Ethos of Islam and modernity," a conference paper presented at Westminster University, London, England February 21, 2004: http://insight.org/articles/Current/MuslimMinorities.htm.

24. Cf., M.H. Kamali, "Islam, Rationality and Science," in Islam and Science, vol. 1, no. 2 (2003), 126f, see also Mehdi Golshani, "Philosophy of Science from the Qur'anic Perspective," in *Towards Islamisation of Disciplines* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1989), 73f.

25. Cf. Ishfaq Ahmad, "Research and Development Culture in the Islamic World: Past and Present Problems and Future Directions," in Abu Bakr Abdul Majeed et al. (eds.) *New Knowledge, Research and Development in the Muslim World* (Kuala Lumpur: Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia, 2004), 14-15.

26. See for a discussion Oliver Leaman, "Institutionalising Research and Development Culture in the Islamic and Non-Islamic World: A Comparative Perspective," in Abu Bakr Majeed, (ed.) *New Knowledge*, 50-51.

27. Malik bin Nabi, *Intaj al-Mustashriqin*, 26.

28. See for details Mohammad Hashim Kamali, "Issues in the Understanding of Jihad and Ijtihad" in *Islamic Studies* 41 (2002), 623 ff.

29. There is a chapter on *ijtihad* in M. H. Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1991, 3rd edn. 2003). See also my article "Issues in the Understanding of Jihad and Ijtihad" in *Islamic Studies*, 41 (2002), 617-635; and "Issues in the Legal Theory and Usul and Prospects for Reform" in *Islamic Studies*, 40 (2001), 1-21.

30. Sergio Moravia. *The Enigma of the Mind: The Mind-Body Problem in Contemporary Thought*, tr. S. Staton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. Firs published in Rome, 1986), 4-5.

31. See for example, Howard Gardner, *Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligence for the 21st Century* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

32. See for details Roger Garudy, "The Balance Sheet of Western Philosophy in this Century" in *Towards Islamisation of Disciplines* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1989), 399f.

33. Mehdi Golshani, "From Knowledge to Wisdom: A Qur'anic Perspective," in *Islamic Studies*, 44 (2005), 13.

34. Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Fiqh al-Awlawiyyat*, 68.

35. Cf., Al-Ahwani, *al-Tarbiyah fi'l-Islam*, 189.

36. Mohammad Hashim Kamali is Professor of Islamic Law and jurisprudence at the International Islamic University Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur. "Reading the Signs," Center for Islam and Science. Gale Group, 2006.

NOTES TO THE TEXT

1. See *Sahih al-Bukhari, Sahih Muslim* with slight variation
2. See *Sahih al-Bukhari*
3. See *Sahih Muslim*
4. See *Sahih Muslim*
5. See *Sahih Muslim*
6. See Abu Dawud, Tirmidhi
7. See *Sahih al-Bukhari, Sahih Muslim, Tirmidhi*
8. See Abu Dawud, Tirmidhi
9. See *Sahih al-Bukhari*, *Sahih Muslim*, Malik
10. See *Sahih al-Bukhari*
11. See *Sahih al-Bukhari*
12. See Introduction to Book Year 7
13. Related by Ibn Jarir and Ibn Abi Hatim
14. See *Sahih Muslim*
15. al-Ghazzali, *Deliverance from Error.*

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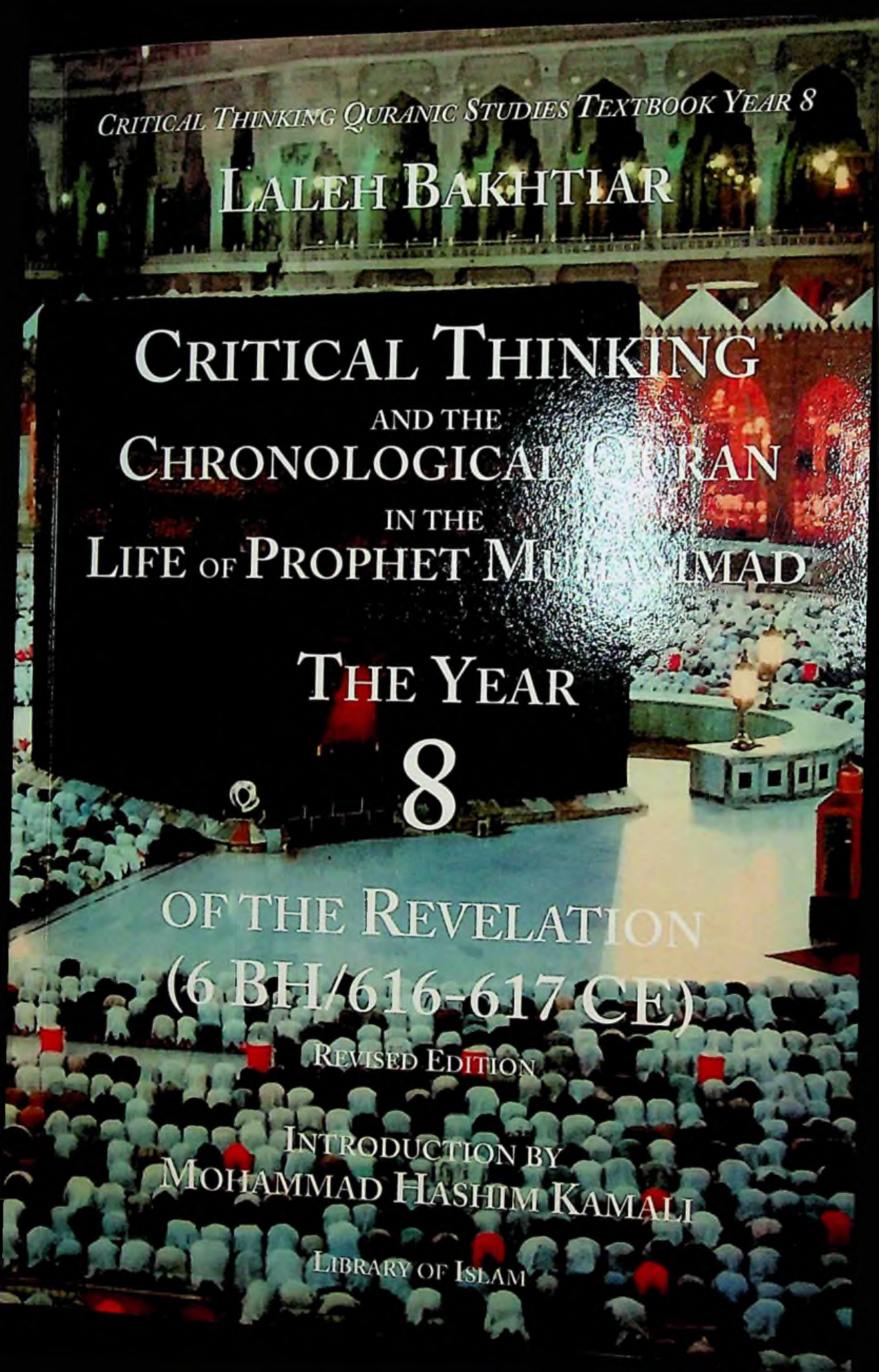
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Mohammad Hashim Kamali
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Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series Year 8

Critical Thinking and the Chronological Quran in the Life of Prophet Muhammad

The Year 8 of the Revelation (6 BH/616-617 CE)

Revised Edition

Laleh Bakhtiar

Introduction by
Mohammad Hashim Kamali

Library of Islam

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PREFACE

THE CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STUDIES TEXTBOOK SERIES

There are thirty books in this series. Books entitled *Book Year 1* to *Book Year 24* consist of one book for each year of the revelation. The chapters' or sections' signs (*ayat*) are presented according to the 558 *ruku* or sections of the 114 chapters of the Quran. They each include the relevant chapter (*surah*) or chapters (when they are short) or sections, *ruku* (when there are multiple sections in a particular chapter) in chronological order. The chapters are numbered according to the chronological order of the Quranic chapters provided by al-Azhar University as the officially accepted order of revelation. Each section (*ruku*) is followed by a commentary by one of the well-known commentators.

Book Year 8, the present volume, covers events from Muharram 1-Dhu al-Hijja 29, 6 BH/September 19, 616 CE-September 7, 617 CE.

Books 25-28 are devoted to the Quranic stories of all other Prophets and Messengers in order of their dates. *Book 25: Adam, Cain and Abel, Enoch (Idris), Noah, Hud and the People of Aad; Saleh and the People of Thamud; Book 26: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Jacob (Israel), Joseph and Job; Book 27: Moses, Aaron, Children of Jacob (Israel), Jethro (Shuayb), Joshua, Khidr and Samuel; Book 28: David, Solomon, Elijah (Ilyas), Elisha (Alyasa), Jonah (Younis), Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl), Ezra (Uzayr), Dhul Qarnayn (Cyrus the Great or Alexander the Great), Luqman, Zechariah, John the Baptist (Yahya), Mary and Jesus.* The last two are: *Book 29: The Life of Prophet Muhammad from Birth to the Revelation* and *Book 30: Teacher's Manual.* The last, *Book 30,* has been prepared for the teacher's Lesson Plans.

At the beginning of each lesson, there is an exercise in critical thinking skills. These consist of one of the following: **The Nine Intellectual Standards, The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** and **The Seven Moral Traits.** The Eight Elements contain thirty-five strategies. However there is no specific order as to how they should be learned and incorporated into our thinking process.

Once we understand the critical thinking skills and then apply them to the signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. Once the skills as presented in the Quranic message are put into practice with the grace of God, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behavior.

Each lesson is followed by questions for classroom discussion or for dialogue. At the end of each lesson there is an assessment/assignment for students to use while they are developing critical thinking skills as they hopefully learn HOW the Quran teaches critical thinking.

SOURCES

The sources for the history include the works of Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hashim, Waqidi, Ibn Sad and commentaries by Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn, Tustari and Sayyid Qutb. The sources for the commentaries of Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn and Tustari have been used with the permission of the publisher, the Royal Institute of Ahl al-Bayt in Jordan. They are available on their website www.altafsir.com.

The inclusion of excerpted commentaries (tafsir) by Sayyid Qutb's In the Shade of the Quran (available online) in this Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series is because Sayyid Qutb is considered by some extremist groups as their intellectual source. By including excerpts from his eighteen volume Quranic commentary, extremists cannot disclaim the importance of learning critical thinking as this series is to help young adults learn HOW to think using self-realization (tahqiq) and critical thinking (furqan) skills taught by the Quran. This in order to arm young adults with the ability to choose reason over any irrational extremist ideology that is presented to them.

TERMINOLOGY

All Quranic signs are translations from The Sublime Quran. For the Muslim, the Quran is the Word (Logos) of God. It is this Word of God that has inspired artists, artisans, poets, philosophers and writers, those who had been the exponents of Islamic culture and civilization for almost 1500 years. Yesterday and today's Muslim wants to know more about each Word that God chose for His revelation through the Quran. This realization, in turn, prompted the translation of The Sublime Quran, an attempt to give the sense of unity within the revelation to a non-Arabic speaking reader.

There are several points to note about the terminology used in the translation of the Quranic text and the commentaries.

1. The blessed Prophet did not bring a new religion; he came to confirm what was right in the messages of the previous Prophets. Does this translation speak to the universality of the Quran? The Quran tells the Prophet, the mercy to all of humanity, to speak to people in their own language. Following his example, in addition to the translation being unbounded by time, in several sensitive cases, the word chosen to translate an Arabic word is also of a universal or inclusive rather than a particular or exclusive nature. This adds to the broadening of the perspective and scope of the Quran so that it becomes inclusive rather than exclusive to one particular group of people. In other words, in this way a larger audience can relate to its message.

2. The actual word "Islam" comes from the verb, "to submit" (*aslama*), submission (*sallama*), and ones who submit (*muslimun*). The Quran refers to itself (the Quran) from the very beginning of the revelation (68:35).

3. As previously indicated, the four books (Book 25, Book 26, Book 27 and Book 28) are the stories of the other Prophets and Messengers mentioned in the Quran. While these stories do have lessons to be learned by the Prophet

and those who heard the revelations as well as for us today, they do not refer directly to Prophet Muhammad and his prophethood following the beginning of the revelation. What remains in these books of the Quranic signs in the 24 years of the chronological Quran relate directly to him, what he did and what he was told to say. This allows us to understand his life directly from the Quranic message, the Quranic Sunnah, without any interruption of the stories about previous Prophets and Messengers.

4. Most English translations of the Quran refer to the "Children of Israel." The word "Israel" when used in the Quran refers to Jacob, the patriarch of the children who followed him such as Joseph. Therefore, it should be the "Children of Jacob" as it appears in these texts.

5. The words "*kufr*" and "*kafir*" have been translated here as "ingratitude" and "ungrateful" where the context allows. This is the first meaning of the word and many of us in our lifetime have met Muslims who are "ungrateful." It is the ungrateful Muslims who practice intolerance by declaring anyone who says: Peace be upon you (*as-salam alaykum*) as a non-believer (with what is called *takfir*). In those cases, it would not be suitable to call them "unbelievers" or "infidels," but it is clearly appropriate to refer to them as being "ungrateful" and this would include the early Quraysh, ungrateful for God's revelation and prophethood of Muhammad, who ridiculed the Prophet and fought against the Quranic message of love, forgiveness and peace.

6. Yet another example of the use of inclusive language in an attempt to speak to people in their own language, is the use of God instead of Allah. Many English speaking Muslims, as well as many of the English translations of the Quran to date, use Allah when speaking English instead of God. The intention on the part of the speaker is to maintain a sense of piety. They feel that using Allah in English moves them in that direction. Many even claim that the word Allah cannot be translated.

However well-intentioned a person may be, when speaking English, the use of the word Allah instead of God, first of all, does not follow the Quranic verse that tells the Prophet to speak to people in their own language. Subsequently, it does not follow the Sunnah of the Prophet who did speak to people in their own language.

In addition, it creates a divide between Muslims who use the word and the English speaking people of various faiths to whom they are speaking. In effect, it creates the illusion that there is more than One God—Allah and God. The response of the English speaking person of another faith is to say: I do not understand your religion; you have a different God than I do and you call Him Allah.

It needs to be clearly explained to English speaking Muslims that, unlike what they may feel, they do not have a monopoly on the word Allah. Arabic speaking Christians and Arabic speaking Jews also refer to God as Allah. The Old Testament and New Testament, when translated into Arabic, use Allah for God.

English speaking Muslims, therefore, need to recall the message of the Quran that God is One (tawhid). In addition, the Prophet did not bring a new religion but confirmed what was correct in the messages of previous Prophets, namely, that God is One. Finally, they need to follow the example of the Prophet, as the Quran says he is the model or example to be followed, by speaking to people in their own language.

7. The Arabic language, much like old English, has the second person singular (masculine: anta (where the verb ends in *ka*). The English equivalent is the subject: "thou" or the object: "thee" or the possessive: "thy." As these are no longer in common usage in English, wherever the original Arabic uses one of these terms, the word "**you**" or "**your**" appear in bold font so that the reader knows the original was the second person singular. When the Quran is speaking directly to the Prophet, it uses the pronoun "thee" or "thou" so it is an important distinction to make.

Using you (second person plural) is done to help English speaking readers, recognizing that using the second person plural pronoun you (masculine: *antum* where the verb ends in masculine: *kum*) for God is to intimate that God is plural, the only sin in the Quran that is unforgivable. By putting the pronoun **you** in bold font indicates the true intention.

8. For the Arabic word "ayah," the English word used in these texts is "sign" rather than the Biblical term, "verse."

9. Several of the signs were abrogated over time. However the indication of a sign being abrogated was done after the complete revelation of the Quran. Whether or not a sign was later abrogated does not change the fact that the first Muslims who listened to the Quran, heard the signs that may have later been said to have been abrogated and that a hafez of the Quran recites all the signs as they appear in the original Arabic revealed to the Prophet. Whatever signs scholars later determined to be abrogated are still part of the Quran and, therefore, are not relevant to learning to be a Quranic critical thinker, learning HOW to think.

10. The first number that appears when the Quranic Chapters begin refers to the chapter number in the chronological order of the revelation so that Quranic Chapter 110 which was the last to be revealed is number 114 in the chronological order.

11. It is to be noted that whenever the name of Muhammad, Prophet Muhammad or the Prophet are used, one may say a silent prayer of blessings for him.

CRITICAL THINKING• COMPONENT

Quranic critical thinking (furqan, discernment) is a process that analyzes how we think. It is a 3-step process: I: Quranic critical thinkers apply the **Nine Intellectual Standards** (logic, being definitive, connected, appropriate, have worthiness, include numerous viewpoints, have right judgment, clarity, being fair and just) to: **II: The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** (point of

view, purpose, questions, information, inferences, concepts, assumptions, implications): in order to develop: **III: The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** (belief in One God (tawhid), God-consciousness (taqwa), virtuous conduct (birr) or integrity through moral discipline, empowering constancy ('azm) and courage, persevering in goodness (sabara), love (hubb) or empathic altruism (ihsan) and being fair and just (rashad). The signs (ayat) in each section (ruku) teach any or every one of the **Nine Intellectual Standards** or any and every one of the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or any or every one of the **Seven Quranic Moral Traits.**

This is the key to critical thinking. We do not learn "what" to think, but, rather, "how" to think. Using the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** as an example, critical thinking can be summarized in the following sentence: Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** and consequences. We use **concepts,** ideas and theories to **interpret information** (data, facts and experiences) in order to **answer questions,** solve problems, and resolve issues.

The point of view in all cases is that of the Quranic message and the various individuals and groups that it addresses as this series is a course in Quranic Studies as well as a course in the chronological history of the life of the blessed Prophet (sira). Each student is encouraged to come up with his or her own questions and responses to those questions in order to learn how to become the Quranic critical thinker as the Quranic teaches us HOW to think.

It is important to note that there is no correct or incorrect answer. The important point is to go through the process with as many of the sections as one is able to do. Little by little, this will help each student or reader to develop into critical thinkers or "discerners" of the Quranic message creating a bond between them and the Quranic message.

Once we learn to analyze signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. It is important to note that the order of **The Nine Intellectual Standards** or **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or **The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** is not important. With the grace of God, once all are present, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behaviors.

THE NINE INTELLECTUAL STANDARDS

1. LOGIC (REASONABLE: 'AQALA, 'AQL)
2. DEFINITIVENESS (TO BE PRECISE: MUHKAMA)
3. CONNECTEDNESS (CONTAINING COMPLEXITIES AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS: (MUQTARIN)

4. APPROPRIATENESS (TO MAKE RELEVANT: SADID)
5. WORTHINESS (FOCUSING ON THE IMPORTANT, NOT TRIVIAL, TO BE SIGNIFICANT: AHL)
6. NUMEROUS OR MULTIPLE VIEWPOINTS: 'DHARA'A)
7. RIGHT JUDGMENT (RUSHD)
8. CLARITY (UNDERSTANDABLE, TO BE CLEAR: TABAYYANA)
9. BEING FAIR AND JUST ('AQL, RIGHT-MINDED (RASHAD))

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES

1. **EMBODYING A POINT OF VIEW, FRAME OF REFERENCE, PERSPECTIVE (RECOLLECT, BEAR IN MIND, TAKE FOR GRANTED: TADHAKKUR)**
   - THINKING INDEPENDENTLY
   - DEVELOPING INSIGHT INTO EGO-CENTRICITY OR SOCIO-CENTRICITY
   - EXPLORING THOUGHTS UNDERLYING FEELINGS AND FEELINGS UNDERLYING THOUGHTS
   - DEVELOPING INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY
2. **GENERATING A PURPOSE, AIM, GOAL, OBJECTIVE: (CONSIDER: RA'A)**
   - CLARIFYING ISSUES OR CONCLUSIONS
   - CLARIFYING AND ANALYZING THE MEANINGS OF WORDS OR PHRASES
   - READING CRITICALLY: CLARIFYING OR DISCERNING THE SACRED TEXT
   - LISTENING CRITICALLY: THE ART OF SILENT DIALOGUE
3. **RAISING QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, ISSUES: (REFLECT: TAFAKKARA)**
   - PRACTICING DISCUSSION: CLARIFYING AND QUESTIONING INTERPRETATIONS
   - REASONING DIALOGICALLY: COMPARING INTERPRETATIONS
   - REASONING DIALECTICALLY: EVALUATING INTERPRETATIONS KNOWLEDGE, WISDOM
   - DEEP QUESTIONING
4. **USING INFORMATION, DATA, FACTS, OBSERVATIONS, EXPERIENCES, REASONED JUDGMENTS (EVIDENCE: BASIRAH)**
   - DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION: CLARIFYING VALUES AND STANDARDS
   - ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ACTIONS
   - DISTINGUISHING RELEVANT FROM IRRELEVANT INFORMATION
   - GIVING REASONS AND EVALUATING EVIDENCE
5. **MAKING INTERPRETATIONS, INFERENCES, CONCLUSION, SOLUTIONS (UNDERSTANDING: TABASSUR)**
   - ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ARGUMENTS AND INTERPRETATIONS
   - MAKING PLAUSIBLE INFERENCES OR INTERPRETATIONS
   - RECOGNIZING CONTRADICTIONS
   - NOTING SIGNIFICANT SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES
6. **UTILIZING CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS, PRINCIPLES, MODELS**

AND VOCABULARY (RECALL: IDHDHAKARA)
COMPARING ANALOGOUS SITUATIONS: REFRAMING INSIGHTS TO NEW CONTEXTS
DEVELOPING ONE'S PERSPECTIVE: CREATING OR EXPLORING ARGUMENTS
MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS
COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE
THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING
7. MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PREPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED (OPINIONS: ZUNUN)
8. GENERATING IMPLICATIONS, CONSEQUENCES (PONDER, EVALUATE: TADABBUR)
GENERATING OR ASSESSING SOLUTIONS
EXPLORING IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES IN DETAIL

1. Embodying a **Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective** (Recollect, Bear in Mind, Take to Heart (*tadhakkur*)):Whenever we think, we think within a point of view. What is the Quranic point of view in these signs? Does the Quran follow universal intellectual values of clarity, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, logic, fairness?

2. Generating a **Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective** (Consider (*ra'a*)): My purpose in addressing the Quranic purpose in these signs is . . .? Know exactly what you are after. Make sure you are not operating with a hidden agenda and that your announced and real purposes are the same. Whenever we think, we think for a purpose. What is the Quran's fundamental purpose in revealing these signs? Are there multiple points of view?

3. Raising **Questions, Problems, Issues** (Reflect (*tafakkara*)): What is the key question I am trying to answer. State the question as clearly and precisely as you can. Details are very important.

4. Using **Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments** (Evidence (*basirah*)): Actively seek the information most relevant to the question. Include in that information options for action, both short-term and long-term. We use experiences, facts and data that the Quran gives us. What information does the Quran give in these signs? What information do I need to answer my question?

5. Making **Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusions, Solutions** (Understanding (*tabassur*)): After reasoning (discerning) the above points, decide what the best answer (conclusion) to the question is.

What inferences, judgments or conclusions do these signs make? What are my most fundamental inferences or conclusions based on these Quranic signs?

6. Utilizing **Concepts, Theories, Definitions, Axioms, Laws, Principles, Models, Vocabulary** (Recall (*idhdhakara*)): The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are ... ? Figure out all significant ideas needed to understand and answer your question. You may need to analyze these concepts. Use a good dictionary. Inferences or conclusions are based on Quranic concepts and theories. What is the most basic concept in my question? What Quranic terms have I learned?

7. Making **Assumptions, Presuppositions, Taking for Granted** (Opinions (*zunun*)): Some important assumptions I am using in my thinking are ... ? Figure out what you are taking for granted. Watch out for self-serving or unjustified assumptions. The Quranic point of view is based on some assumptions. What assumptions is the Quran using in its reasoning? What assumptions am I using in my reasoning from the Quranic revelation?

8. Generating **Implications, Consequences** (Ponder (*tadabbur*)): Evaluate options. Take into account the advantages and disadvantages of possible decisions before acting? What consequences are likely to follow from this or that decision? The Quranic assumptions and my assumptions lead to implications and consequences. What are the implications of the Quranic reasoning? What are the implications of my reasoning? Am I correct in understanding the Quranic implications?

THE SEVEN QURANIC MORAL TRAITS

1. BELIEF IN ONE GOD (TAWHID)
2. GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (TAQWA)
3. VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE (MORALLY OBLIGATED: QANATA, GOODNESS, BIRR)
4. EMPOWERING CONSTANCY, COURAGE (AZM)
5. PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS (STEADFAST: SABARA)
6. EMPATHIC ALTRUISM (LOVE, MERCY, COMPASSION: HUBB)
7. FAIRNESS (NOT SELF-SERVING OR EGO-CENTRIC: 'AQSATA)

*****

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to the work of M. M. Sharif, "Philosophical Teachings of the Quran," and B. A. Dar, "Ethical Teachings of the Quran," (indicated by * in the text) in A History of Muslim Philosophy and to my dearest friend, Khalida Rahman who has been supportive of my work for over twenty-five years.

My gratitude also goes to the Center for Critical Thinking and, particularly, the online work done in youtube videos and other works by the educator-founders-members of the Critical Thinking Community, namely, the late Dr. Richard Paul and his wife and constant collaborator, Dr. Linda Elder. All indications of • throughout the text refers to quotes or paraphrases from their excellent work as part of the Critical Thinking Community, www.criticalthinking.org. My attempt has been for all the quotes and paraphrases used here to follow fair copyright use.

Whereas Drs. Paul and Elder may not have used their work in religious educational settings, due to the separation of church and state in the educating of American students, learning from their works it became clear that their teachings can help Muslim students, as well, if their method is presented through the content of the Quran. If Muslim students come to understand that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking, that is, discernment (furqan), HOW to think, they will be armed with the intellectual skills they need to confront Islamic extremism.

One of the main scholars that Islamic extremists use in their propaganda is Seyyed Qutb. In order to further arm Muslim students for any confrontation they may have with Islamic extremists who would quote that their ideas come from Seyyed Qutb, I have used his Quranic commentary, In the Shade of the Quran, in Chapter I of this work. Students will learn how, contrary to what they may be told or taught, in many cases, Seyyed Qutb's commentary (indicated by °) speaks of and describes the way that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking and Islamic extremists cannot say that I have left out their scholars.

Last, but certainly not least, I wish to thank Kazi Publications and its founder, Liaquat Ali, for his constant support and encouragement to forge new areas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqli*) will be passed to young students as they learn of a Muslim world deeply entrenched in Islamic narrative sciences (*al-naqli*).

INTRODUCTION
READING THE SIGNS: A QURANIC PERSPECTIVE ON THINKING
BY MOHAMMAD HASHIM KAMALI

The Islamic notion of *aql* (intellect) embraces the faith dimension of knowledge that is also informed by ethical values. The prevailing reading of the Quran on rationality consists of a coalition of faith and reason which is also cognizant of the metaphysical aspect of reality and the limits, therefore, of human reason. This may be said to be a dividing line between the Islamic and Western conceptions of rationality, especially in its post-Enlightenment context.

Thus, it is not accurate to draw a direct parallel between them, as was the case in the Islamic discourse of the colonial period wherein many Muslim writers greatly admired the Western conception of rationality. The twentieth century Islamic discourse has shown awareness of that difference as it began to comprehend the subtleties inherent in the Western lexicon on rationality and its cultural overtones.[1]

THE DIVINE SIGNS (*AYAT*)

The Quran teaches an essential doctrine of the *ayat* (God's signs in the universe) functioning as pointers to the providential purpose at all levels of creation. Thus the Quran makes frequent references such as 'signs for a people who understand—exercise their intellect'. This evidential role of the divine signs entails an accompanying demand placed upon humans to engage in a rational understanding of the signs and draw conclusions on the discovery of truth and correct guidance.

The human reception of the signs, thus, depends ultimately upon the integrity of reason, without which humans would be incapable neither of comprehending the signs nor of responding to their message. The more abundant is an individual's native endowment of reason, the greater is the possibility for him or her to attain a larger magnitude of understanding and a higher level of response.

The nexus between faith and reason thus constitutes the hallmark of intelligent Islamic spirituality, wherein human intellect and emotions are guided toward harmony with one another. The Quran repeatedly provokes its reciters to think about the signs of God in the universe and within themselves, to understand God's illustrious presence in them, and ultimately to vindicate the truth. The word *ayah* and its plural *ayat* occur in the Quran over 400 times, although the whole of the Quran introduces itself as a collection of *ayat*. To quote the Quran: *We will cause them to see Our signs on the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is The Truth.* (41:53)

And, *On the earth are signs, for the ones that are certain and in yourselves. Will you not, then, perceive?* (51:20-51:21)

God reveals the truth in a variety of ways, some explicit and others by allusion, the latter mainly through the modality of the signs, in order to provoke and engage the human intellect. The signs of God cannot be readjust off the face of the signs but require thinking and reflection. This is indicated in the phrase: *We will cause them to see Our signs ...* which suggests that the signs may not be instantaneously visible to the naked eye. The whole concept of signs seeks to forge a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* (38:29) A sign is also a portent and allusion to something other than itself and should not therefore be seen as the final message and purpose of the revelation containing it.

Approximately 750 verses, or nearly one-eighth of the Quran, exhort the readers to study nature, history, the Quran itself, and humanity at large. The text of the Quran employs a range of expressions in its appeal to those who listen (*yasma'un*), those who think (*yatafakkarun*), those who reflect (*yatadabbarun*), those who observe (*yanzurun*), those who exercise their intellect (*ya'qilun*), those who take heed and remember (*yatadhakkarun*), those who ask questions (*yas'alun*), those who develop an insight (*yatafaqqahun*), and those who know (*ya'lamun*).[2]

These and their derivatives (mostly occurring in the active verbal form) consist essentially of open invocations and encouragement to thinking that is not limited by a methodology or framework. *Meditate they not, then, on the Quran* (*afala yatadabbarun al-Qur'an*) (47:24) *Tadabbur* means concentrated and goal-oriented thinking provoked by the challenge to find something new or to solve a difficult problem.

Quranic references to thinking and the exercise of intellect occur in conjunction with basically five major themes: Belief in the Oneness and generosity of God (*tawhid*); reflection on the Quran; the human being and the universe; historical precedent; and thinking itself.

References to *aql* (intellect) and its derivatives occur on 49 occasions in the text. The typical Quranic expression, *ulu'l-albab* (those who possess vision and understanding), and its synonym, *ulu'l-nuha* (people endowed with intellectual abilities) occur 33 times in the text. Such expressions are frequently juxtaposed with the exposition of signs, such as in the sign: *Thus, God makes manifest His signs to you so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (2:242) or in the sign: *Surely, We made manifest the signs to you so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (57:17). Repeated references to pondering over the signs are variously nuanced such that they embrace within their fold the widest spectrum of people who may be endowed with different intellectual abilities and endowments.[3]

Al-Isfahani defines thought (*al-fikr*) as the power of the mind that facil-

itates access to knowledge (*'ilm*). Thinking (*al-tafakkur*) is the movement of that power which is driven by the intellect (*al-'aql*), and this can only occur when an initial image of the subject is attainable in the mind of the thinker. Thinking cannot, therefore, proceed over something of which no image exists in the mind. This can be said of the self of God, for example, as we have no image on which to focus our thought.[4]

The human being can only think over the attributes of God through the observation of His signs. Broadly speaking, thinking proceeds over the whole of the created universe without any exception; indeed, the Quran repeatedly invites such in respect to both the physical and abstract aspects of reality, both in the present and in regards to bygone history that is only perceived by the intellect rather than sense perception. Often the Quran gives examples, parables, and narratives of other nations, and then follows them with the reminder, usually addressed to the Prophet, to recount the narratives of the past so that the people may think and reflect over them:

And recount to them the tiding of him to whom We gave Our signs. (7:175)

And there are the parables that We propound for humanity so that perhaps they will reflect. (59:21)

Truly, in that are certainly signs for a folk who reflect. (30:21)

A hierarchy of five perceptive-cognitive functions is also suggested, including and extending through hearing, sight, thinking, dhikr remembrance, and certainty.[5]

Given such a scale of intensified perceptive understanding, the Quran propounds the notion of *ulul'l-albab*, the thoughtful individuals who are possessed of proper understanding and response. *'Aql* is thus tied to the cognitive dimension of faith.

Significantly, the very term for reason and intelligence in Arabic, *al-'aql*, has at the core of its basic meaning the practical idea of "restraining" and "binding," that is, of holding one's self back from blameworthy conduct—being an interior self-imposed limit. Quranic commentators understand thinking (*tafakkur, tafkir*) as pondering and reflection, which is a mental activity and process, not an outcome.

Thinking (*tafakkur*) is considered as a form of worship of God if it is done with sincerity and good purpose. *'Aql* in its Quranic conception is also one that conceives the truth, and it is always in search of it. This conception of *'aql* precludes one that is rigid, arrogant, and misleading. Some have also drawn the conclusion from the ubiquitous Quranic emphasis on thinking that all Muslims must strive to be thinking individuals.[6]

Al-Qaradawi has quoted Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's (d. 751/1350) own observation as well as some epithetic statements, the latter narrated from other leading figures to the effect that "thinking for an hour is better than worship of many years," and another statement that "thinking for an hour is superior to a whole night of prayer." To this Ibn Qayyim added that "thinking is the

act of the heart whereas worship is the act of one's limbs, and the former is superior to the latter."

The pious caliph Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz (d. 101/718) is similarly quoted: Thinking over the bounties of God is the best form of worship. Abbas Mahmud al-Agqad went so far as to say that: Thinking—*al-tafkir*—is an Islamic obligation. Just as God Most High ordered us to worship Him by performing prayer and fasting, He also ordered us to think in numerous verses and in so many different ways, all of which vindicate thinking as one of the cardinal messages of the Quran.[7]

The Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge espoused with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression *al-tafaqquh fi'l-din*, that is, understands the religion, signifying a rational and inquisitive approach to constructing a Quranic worldview.

Islam, in other words, advises analytical knowledge and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely dogmatic approach. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions: Faith based on detailed analysis (*al-iman al-tafsili*) as opposed to undigested and uncomprehended faith (*al-iman al-ijmali*). The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the religious scholars of all the leading schools of thought. Thus it is declared in a sign: *But a section of people only that they become learned in the way of life and that they warn their folk.* (9:122).

We also note the distinction between thought-based knowledge and transmitted or received knowledge reflected in the twin juristic and hadith-related expressions of knowledge based on understanding (*'ilm al-diraya*), and report-based and transmitted knowledge (*'ilm al-riwaya*). The former is based on understanding and insight (*diraya wa tafaqquh*) and takes priority over the latter. Whereas *'ilm al-riwaya* relies mainly on memory and retention, *'ilm al-diraya* is based on cognition, understanding, and analysis.

Thus, if there are hadith reports, or any factual reports for that matter, which do not stand to reason and understanding, they would be most likely discounted and abandoned, with the exception only of devotional matters (*'ibadat*) which are based on faith and submission more than on rational analysis.

Another feature of the Quranic vision of thinking is indicated in its emphasis on wisdom and good judgment (*hikmah*) which signifies the quality of thinking, its regard for values, and its outcome. Wisdom and good judgment can easily be said to be more important than technical know-how and expertise, as it can guide expert knowledge as to its proper application and the attainment of excellence.

The Quran mentions *hikmah* twenty times, and in about ten of these it is

immediately preceded by the word Book or *kitab*, which is a reference to divine scripture—primarily the Quran, but also other divinely revealed scriptures. The text, thus, says with reference to Jesus: *And He teaches him the Book and wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel.* (3:48) The juxtaposition of *kitab* and *hikmah* is often contextualized by a reference to the sending of prophets who teach the people and guide them with scripture and wisdom (e.g., *wa yu'allimuhum al-kitaba wa'l-hikmata*) as it is said of the Prophet Muhammad: *And teaches you the Book and wisdom* (2:159) and: *Teaches them the Book and wisdom* (62:2 ff); the descendants of Prophet Abraham: *We gave the people of Abraham the Book and wisdom* (4:54); and of Luqman: *We gave Luqman wisdom* (31:12). The holistic, superior, and indivisible value of *hikmah* in the Quran is underscored in one of its signs to the effect that when God bestows wisdom on someone that person is indeed granted an immense source of goodness: *And whomever is given wisdom, then, surely, was given much good and none recollects no doubt but those imbued with intuition.* (2:269).

To mention *hikmah* together with the Book evidently means that the Quran should be read with wisdom and divorcing the one from the other by taking a totally dogmatic approach to the Quran goes against the divine purpose and intention of its revelation. To read the Quran in the light of *hikmah* thus means a comprehensive reading that reaches beyond the obvious meaning of its words to encapsulate the goal and purpose of its message and then also reflection on the ways and means of how its benefits can be realized for the individual and society.[8]

The repeated juxtaposition of the "Book and *Hikmah*" in the Quran led some commentators, such as the Successor, Qatadah ibn Diama al-Sadusi (d.118 H), Ibn Wahhab, the disciple of Imam Malik (d. 179/795), and the Imam al-Shafii (d. 205/820) himself to the somewhat unusual observation that "*hikmah*" is a reference to the Sunna of the Prophet. Many have taken and followed this view; but since the text does not specify such a meaning for *hikmah*, the word should convey its natural and unqualified meaning as I have depicted in this presentation.

Good judgment, insight, balance and avoidance of extremes, the ability to distinguish between truth and falsehood, and procedural accuracy are commonly associated with *hikmah* and *hikmah* as such becomes a dimension of evaluative thinking in. its Quranic idiom. Besides, when the Quran declares that God Most High endowed the Prophets David and Solomon and also the renowned sage Luqman with *hikmah*, it could not have referred to the Sunna of the Prophet Muhammad, as Sunna as such did not exist in those times.

The Quranic usage of *hikmah* reinforces the holistic quality of thinking. *Hikmah* also seeks to forge a close tie between reason and emotion (*'aql wa qalb*) thereby encouraging what is now known as emotional intelligence. This is how the Quran and also the Sunna often deliver their messages, for, unlike

the modern statutory laws and texts, the Quranic guidance, commands, and prohibitions are often espoused with appeals to the heart and mind of their readers.[9]

Al-Isfahani defined *hikmah* as the realization of the truth through knowledge and intellect and it is manifested in the performance of benevolent deeds.[10] According to another definition: Wisdom signifies comprehension of the truth and reality and the ability to avoid corruption in one's quest to attain perfection."[11]

Random House Dictionary of the English Language similarly defines wisdom as: Knowledge of what is true or right coupled with just judgment as to action. Wisdom is thinking informed by the light of the heart that often leads to action and contemplates its consequences in relationship with other relevant factors. This may strike a note with the renowned hadith in which it is declared that: Fearing God is the pinnacle of wisdom (*ra's al-hikmati makhafat Allah*)."[12]

It is presumably for this reason that the great religions of the world have urged the seekers of knowledge to combine it with wisdom. It is wisdom that confers a higher quality on thinking and helps knowledge to be used for the promotion of good giving it meaning and direction.

In an effort to train the individual to enhance his or her quality of thinking, al-Ghazali (d. 505/1111) discusses the two sources of knowledge that Muslim tradition has recognized. One of these is through human teaching and learning (*al-ta'allum al-insani*) and the other through divine teaching (*al-ta'lim al-rabbani*).

The former is externally transmitted from teacher to student, whereas the latter is conveyed by the Universal Intellect which is superior, more intense, and more effective than human teaching. This knowledge is internally acquired either through revelation (*wahy*), which is a prerogative of the Prophets, or it is acquired through meditation, thinking, and reflection.

Al-Ghazali subscribes to the view that the essence of all knowledge is centered in the inner self of the human person in much the same way as growth potential that is vested in the soil and seed, and it is through teaching that the individual's potential is developed.[13] These two aspects of knowledge, that is, the external and the internal, are complementary to one another. This is because no one can possibly teach or learn from any teacher all the sciences, some of which are learned through teaching but the rest inferred by the reflective thought of the individual. It is therefore important that the avenues of learning remain open both through teaching and through inner reflection, thinking, and illumination. This is another way of saying that all knowledge is acquired and developed through the senses, inner reflection and thinking, both of which partake in natural endowment and development through external transmission and teaching.

Al-Ghazali's views on the internal and external sources of knowledge

tended to correspond with those of Ibn Sina (d. 428/1037), but which differed, at least partially, from those of the second/ninth century Ikhwan al-Safa (c. 373/983). All knowledge, according to the latter, is acquired through the senses and none inheres in human nature. Knowledge that is developed through thought and reflection also originate in the senses. The same analysis is extended to the axiomatic knowledge of postulates that are derived and confirmed through the senses. In support of this theory Ikhwan al-Safa have cited the Quranic verse: *And God brought you out from the wombs of your mothers and you know nothing.* (16:78). All knowledge is therefore acquired knowledge, a view which may strike a closer note with some of the modern theories on the subject.[14]

Muslim thought in the middle ages did not admit the ontological distinction between tangible entities that could be sensuously apprehended and entities of a spiritual or subliminal nature. This may be said to be a more sound and realistic view of reality than is allowed for by the modern positivist doctrines of science. Being is manifested at various levels and in several forms, none of which is less real than the other. Arabic thought employed the notions systematized in Stoic theory that divide being into three locations: Verbal utterance, psychic representation, and reality—without this last in any sense having exclusive title to Being.

Al-Farabi (d. 950 CE) took up this view and assimilated psychic representation to the entities of reason. Others rehearsed this division with the addition of a fourth location, that of Scripture. Reality thus had a four-fold manifestation, depending on whether the subject existed immediately in itself or whether its like was graven in the mind (*dhihn*, psyche) composed of sounds, which together indicates the psychic representation, or was manifested in characters standing for sound and speech. All four have a basic characteristic in common which is existence (*wujud, haqiqah*).[15]

The Islamic and Western perceptions of creative and evaluative thinking both recognize this to be a skill that is developed through training and controlled exercise. It is through training and thinking that we adopt new patterns of perceiving reality that we are able to see differently and creatively. It is generally acceded that creative thinking and critical thinking go hand-in-hand and complement one another. Critical thinking means "involving or exercising skilled judgment or observation." Thinking is critical when it evaluates the reasoning behind a decision. Such evaluation must, however, be carried forth in a constructive manner.[16]

The purpose of critical thinking is to achieve understanding, evaluate viewpoints, and solve problems. In general, one's thinking is likely to become critical when concrete learning experiences precede abstract thought.[17] This strikes a parallel note, in its Islamic idiom, with thinking that is espoused with *hikmah*.

The famous yet controverted hadith: The first (being) God created is the

intelligence (*awwalu ma khalaqa Allahu al-'aqla*), sparked prolonged discussions among Muslim thinkers over many centuries over the implications of this statement. Among the issues debated was the priority of reason over revelation and the respective role of each in their mutual inter-dependence.

Another issue was whether the disparity among humans in respect of reason also affected the modalities of moral obligation. Some prominent thinkers including Abu Bakr al-Razi (d. 313/925) apparently advocated the primacy of reason over the revelation. This would be properly known as "rationalism," which deems the primacy of reason over revelation. This is different from "rationality" which means treating any issue by using reason without giving reason priority.

SOURCES AND INSTRUMENTS OF KNOWLEDGE

Commenting on the Quranic passage quoted earlier, Muhammad Iqbal observed that the Quran regards both self (*anfus*) and world (*afaq*) as sources of knowledge. God reveals His signs in inner as well as outer experience. The Quran thus opens fresh vistas of knowledge in the domain of our inner experience. Mystic experience and intuition, then, however unusual and abnormal, must now be regarded as perfectly natural and open to scrutiny like other aspects of human experience.[ii] But inner experience is only one source of human knowledge. The outer experience in the Quran, Iqbal continues on the same page, unfolds two other sources of knowledge—nature and history, and it is in tapping these sources of knowledge that "the spirit of Islam is seen at its best".

The Quran sees the signs of reality in the sun, the moon, the alternation of day and night, the perpetual changes of the winds, the variety of human colors and tongues, and in fact in the whole of nature as revealed to the sense-perception of man. The Muslim's duty is to reflect on these signs and not to pass by them as if he is deaf and blind *They have hearts with which they understand not. And they have eyes with which they perceive not. And they have ears with which they hear not. Those are like flocks. Nay! They are ones who go astray. Those, they are the ones who are heedless* (7:179), for he who does not see these signs in this life will remain blind to the realities of the life to come. The divine signs are observed through sense-perception using mainly the faculties of hearing, sight, and intellect: *Journey they not through the earth? Have they not hearts with which to be reasonable or ears with which to hear?* (22:46) The emphasis in this sign is on the faculty of reason and understanding, suggesting that not all of our information about nature comes directly from sensation, for if that were the case we would be no different from animals.

Frequent references to sense-perception as the principal mode of receiving the signs show the scientific/experimental import of the Quran. The Quran goes even further to suggest sense perception as the only avenue of knowl-

edge, as the text already reviewed provides: *And God brought you out from the wombs of your mothers and you know nothing. And He assigned to you the ability to hear and sight and mind so that perhaps you will give thanks.* (16:78) Knowledge of the signs is therefore acquired through the use of these faculties. In another sign, the Quran praises those who listen to the word and follow the best of it: *Those who listen to the saying of the Quran and follow the fairer of it. Those are those whom God guided. And those, they are imbued with intuition.* (or make the best possible interpretation thereof) (39:18). This sign apparently subjects the data of sense-perception to the exercise of intellectual selection. The text also teaches that sense-perception does not perceive all reality: *So I swear an oath by what you perceive and what you perceive not.* (69:37-69:38). Certainty (*yaqin*) may also be beyond the reach of human intellect, as the human mind may be blurred by the variables of time and space. What is deemed certain today may be uncertain tomorrow.

We also note that according to the teachings of the Quran, the universe is dynamic in its origin, finite, and capable of increase. Early Muslim thinkers do not seem to have grasped the Quranic emphasis on inductive reasoning and experimentation. It was indeed a slow realization for Muslim thinkers to note "that the spirit of the Quran was essentially anti-classical". Putting full confidence in Greek reasoning, Muslim thinkers tried to understand the Quran in the light of Greek philosophy, which in the beginning of their careers they had studied with so much enthusiasm.

The substance of Iqbal's analysis on this subject is also upheld by Malik bin Nabi (1905-1973), who understands the creative impulse of the Quran as the motivating force behind the efflorescence of science at a time when Muslim thinkers began to grasp the full impact of the Quran on experimentation and inductive reasoning.[18]

The dynamic conception of the universe in the Quran is also seen by its conception of life as an evolutionary movement in time. History thus constitutes the third source of knowledge in the Quran. It is one of the most essential teachings of the Quran, as Iqbal has further observed, that nations are collectively judged, and suffer for their misdeeds here and now. The Quran thus constantly cites historical instances, and urges upon the reader to reflect on the past and present experiences of humanity: *Customs passed away before you. So journey through the earth; then, look on how had been the Ultimate End of the ones who deny.* (3:137)

If a wound afflicts you, surely, a wound afflicted the folk similar to that. And these are the days We rotate among humanity so that God knows those who believed and takes witnesses to Himself from among you. (3:140)

And: *And of whom We created there is a community that guides with The Truth, and with it, it is just. And those who denied Our signs, We will draw them on gradually from where they will not know.* (7:181-183)

The Quran's interest in history as a source of human knowledge extends

farther than mere indication of historical generalizations. "It has given us one of the most fundamental principles of historical criticism."[19] Since accuracy in recording facts is an indispensable condition of history as a science, accuracy depends ultimately on those who report them. The reporter's personal character is thus an important factor in judging his testimony. The Quran says *O those who believed! If one who disobeys drew near to you with a tiding, then, be clear so that you not light on a folk out of ignorance.* (49:6). It is the application of the principle embodied in this sign to the reporters of the Prophet's traditions out of which were gradually evolved the canons of historical criticism.

A scientific treatment of history, however, requires a wider experience, a greater maturity of practical reason, and a fuller realization of certain basic ideas regarding the nature of life and time. These are in the main three, and taken together they constitute the foundation of Quranic teaching.

(1) The unity of human origin: The Quran states: *He creates you from one soul.* (39:6) And: *O humanity! Be God-conscious of your Lord Who created you from a single soul.* (4:1). But the perception of life as an organic unity is a slow achievement. Islam sowed the germ of this aspiration and it became a Quranic assignment of us to work towards its realization. Notwithstanding the fact that Christianity, long before Islam, brought the message of equality to humanity, the Roman Empire had no more than a general and abstract conception of human unity.

On the other hand, the growth of territorial nationalism in Europe has tended to stifle the broad human element in the art and literature of Europe. European colonialism was also inspired by a self-image of superiority. Europe assumed a superior image that non-European peoples could be freely dominated, exploited, and subjugated.[20] It was quite otherwise with Islam. The impulse of Islam was from the outset to make the idea of human unity a living factor in the Muslim experience that was to be taken towards fuller fruition.

(2) A keen sense of the reality of time, and the concept of life as a continuous movement in time: The Quranic view of the alternation of day and night as a sign of the ultimate Reality which appears in a fresh glory every moment and the tendency in Muslim metaphysics to regard time as objective—all this constituted the intellectual heritage and ideals of Islam.

(3) The merger between religious and secular values: This is a unique feature of Islamic thought which is distinguished by its attempt to bring harmony between them, probably for the first time in history. It was in the state of Madinah that we encounter a clear example where universally proclaimed moral values formed the criteria of political judgment. Political leaders and statesmen were expected to recognize not only the value of efficiency, but also of justice, human dignity, equality, and freedom. In his renowned *Philosophy of History*, Hegel (1770-1831) recognized that the unity between the secular and the spiritual took place in Islamic society and civilization long be-

fore it made any impact in the modern West: We must therefore regard (the reconciliation between the secular and spiritual) as commencing rather in the enormous contrast between the spiritual religious principles, and the barbarian Real World. For spirit as the consciousness of an inner world is, at the commencement, itself still in the abstract form. All that is secular is consequently given over to rudeness and capricious violence. The (Muslim) principle, the enlightenment of the oriental world, is the first to contravene this barbarism and caprice. We find it developing itself later and more rapidly than Christianity; for the latter needed eight centuries to grow into a political form.[21]

The modern West followed the example of the historical Islamic world in demanding that holders of political power operate under a set of moral rules. But as the modern West harmonized the secular and religious only nationally, the international realm was free to operate under the dynamics of power politics and secular rudeness. This failure was a cause of the senseless violence that claimed over 100 million war victims in the twentieth century. Recognition of the danger of the purely secular politics led to the creation of the United Nations, yet even this effort was undermined by political realists who enjoyed a disproportionate sway among the political pundits of Europe and America.

Safi has rightly noted the irony that contemporary Muslim societies have unfortunately followed a similar course in decoupling the secular and the religious and now find themselves entangled in a crisis of legitimacy. Many Muslim regimes are driven by the logic of power and operate outside the realm of moral correctness. It is alarming to see that this decoupling has impacted the religiously inspired movements, which seem to succumb to the logic of power in their readiness to employ amoral--even immoral--strategies in their fight against political corruption and oppression.[22]

OBSTACLES TO CORRECT REASONING

The Quranic emphasis on pondering over the signs is also underscored by a set of guidelines to ensure a correct outcome of reflection and thinking over them. The text thus draws attention to a series of exclusions and factors that stand in the way of the proper functioning of intellect:

(1) Pursuit of caprice (*hawa*) which may consist of love, hatred, pomposity and prejudice that confound impartiality and sound judgment: *Had you considered he who took to himself his own desire as his god and whom God caused to go astray out of a knowledge, sealed over his having the ability to hear and his heart and laid a blindfold on his sight? Who, then, will guide him after God? Will you not, then, recollect?* (45:23)

And if you had followed their desires after what drew near you of the knowledge, there is not for you from God either a protector or a helper. (2:120)

But if they respond not to you, then, know that they only follow their own desires. (28:50)

And: *And obey not him whose heart We made neglectful of Our Remem-*

brance and who followed his own desires and whose affair had been excess. (18:28)

The choice is between two alternatives: caprice (*hawa*) and guidance (*huda*); the former evidently renders obscure one's attempt to attain the latter.

(2) Pursuit of conjecture in the face of certitude: And surely conjecture (*al-zann*) avails nothing against the truth (*al-Haqq*). *And most of them follow nothing but opinion. Truly, opinion avails them not against The Truth at all.* (10:36)

And follow up not of what there is not for you knowledge of it. Truly, having the ability to hear and sight and mind, each of those will have been that which is asked. (17:36) Knowledge and truth stand in contradistinction with the pursuit of conjecture. Note that the text says one should not follow conjecture until it is established and elevated to the rank of knowledge. It does not say that one should avoid conjecture altogether. In another place, conjecture occurs side by side with *hawa* or that which they themselves desire: *They follow nothing but opinion and that for which their souls yearn.* (53:23) This is the kind of conjecture or opinion that is meant.

Knowledge is established by sense-perception that often begins with a measure of speculation and doubt but which is affirmed by the light of reason and conviction. Some commentators maintain that the main context for this guideline is religion: Thus it is said that one should not take speculative positions in matters of belief. As for scientific enquiry and pursuit of knowledge, conjecture is neither discouraged nor avoidable.[23]

The ultimate purpose of this engagement is to attain the truth. Once the truth is attained, one should then commit oneself to it and observe it: *And what else is there after The Truth but wandering astray. Where, then, turn you away?* (10:32)

Completed was the Word of your Lord in sincerity and justice. There is no one who changes His Words. (54) (6:115).

(3) Blind imitation of others: The correct exercise of reason in Islam is tied to personal conviction as opposed to indiscriminate following of others, hallowed custom, and precedent. These must be judged in the light of reason and abandoned if found deviant and misleading: The misguided will say, as the Quran provides: *Nay! We will follow whatever we discovered our fathers were following on it —even though their fathers had been not at all reasonable—nor are they truly guided.* (2:170)

And: *Enough is what we found our fathers upon. Even though their fathers had been knowing nothing nor are they truly guided?* (5:104)

This was the response that Prophet Abraham and other great prophets received from their detractors, but the text address them again and again that both you and your ancestors were clearly misguided. *Certainly, We gave Abraham his right judgment before. And We had been ones who know of him when he said to his father and his folk: What are these images to which you be ones*

who give yourselves up to? They said: We found our fathers as ones who are worshippers of them. He said: Certainly, you and your fathers had been in a clear wandering astray.(21:51-21:54)

Forsake those who took to themselves their way of life as a pastime and as a diversion and whom this present life deluded. (6:70)

Is it that your formal prayer commands you that we leave what our fathers worship? (11:87)

As we shall presently elaborate, indiscriminate imitation of others is widely held to be the single most damaging cause of the decline of creative thinking among Muslims.

(4) Oppressive Dictatorship: The Quran takes to task arrogant dictators and those who support them and follow them. Hence the plea of those who say: *Our Lord! Truly, we obeyed our chiefs and our great ones. They caused us to go astray from the way* (33:66) should be of no merit. In a number of other places the text denounces the Pharaoh and Karun for their oppressive ways who misled their people in rejecting the guidance that was conveyed to them. *Pharaoh and his Council but they followed the command of Pharaoh. And the command of Pharaoh was not well-intended.* (11:96)

DECLINE OF CRITICAL THINKING

I shall not retrace well-documented history that Muslim thinkers were pioneers in the creation of new knowledge. It was due to the impact of the Quran that, in contrast to the Greeks who excelled in deductive method of reasoning and logic, Muslim scientists distinguished themselves in inductive and experimental approaches to scientific enquiry. The golden period of Muslim science started around 700 AD and lasted until about 1350 AD. Great thinkers such as Ibn Sina, Jabir ibn Hayyan, Abu Bakr Zakarriya al-Razi, Abu Rayhan al-Biruni, Ibn al-Nafis al-Dimashgi, al-Khawarizmi, and many others have left a rich legacy of contributions to the advancement of sciences in anatomy, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, optics, etc.[24]

After the fourteenth century creative thinking began to decline in the Islamic world due to a variety of factors, including the Mongol invasion and burning of Baghdad, the defeat of the Muslim Arabs in Spain and the continuing crusades, the collapse of the Ottoman caliphate, and the ensuing onslaught of European colonialism. The creative impulse of Islamic thought suffered setbacks as a result. Muslims were also beset with many internal problems including the alienation of philosophers, scientists, and thinkers from the theologians, sectarian controversies, and the prevalence of intellectual conservatism and imitation of past authority (*taqlid*)).

Philosophy and the sciences fell into a rapid decline while more rigid forms of instruction and narrower curricula prevailed. It was argued that orthodoxy was being threatened and that there was a need to restrain thinkers in order to defend religion. The latitude and diversity of discourse that expanded

the scope of religious sciences, theology (*kalam*), commentary (*tafsir*), hadith, and jurisprudence (*fiqh*) gave way to narrower criteria of *kufr*, *bidah*, and *taqlid* and the so-called closing of the door of *ijtihad* (*sadd bab al-ijtihad*).[25]

More recently, a certain abuse of Islamic authority operated by a dogmatic radicalism has exacerbated the decline of creative thought among Muslims. The situation is not helped by the prevalence of passivity in popular culture concerning the dogmatic excesses of these ardent proponents of imitation of past authority (*taqlid*). One of the salient features of this mindset is a certain ignorance of the essential impulse of the Quran on creative thought. Malik bin Nabi put it succinctly that the crisis of a civilization and a society at a critical point of its history "is not the paucity of its material objects but the poverty of its ideas."[26]

WHAT IS *IJTIHAD*?

The Quranic appeal to rational thinking and enquiry is not restrained by the methodology of *ijtihad*. There is, in fact, no clear text on *ijtihad*[27] in the Quran. *Ijtihad* as a concept originates in the hadith of the Prophet and the practice and precedent of companions. The methodology of *ijtihad* which is the basic theme of the science of the sources of law (i.e. *usul al-fiqh*) is itself a product of *ijtihad*. It seems that the Prophet also saw *ijtihad* as a creative impulse rather than engaging in the technicalities of legal reasoning—as the *usul al-fiqh* later developed in abundance. When the Prophet spoke of *ijtihad* or when he approved of its application, he seems to have done so in terms of *ijtihad* qua creative thinking.

One would readily admit that imposing restrictions on thinking, even if it were possible, by cultures and legal traditions could be exaggerated, in which case it would be prone to acquiring negative dimensions. One would not, on the other hand, advocate free thinking that is not limited by some kind of goal-orientation and values. Even the actual process of creative thinking, as earlier noted, is a skill that could be learned and refined by stages to direct it into productive avenues. The liberal tradition of the West tends to impose minimal restrictions on thinking whereas Islam tends to take a more guided approach to creative reasoning. Whereas both the Islamic and Western traditions recognize the authority of reason as a criterion of judgment, the liberal tradition has, unlike Islam, isolated spirituality and faith from the ambit of scientific rationality.

However, the methodology of *ijtihad* was also influenced in the course of time by a variety of factors, including the political climate, the change of caliphate (*khilafah*) to monarchy (*mulk*), Hellenistic thought in relationship to analogy (*qiyas*) and its syllogistic components, and the rift between the religious scholars and ruling authorities.[28]

Usul al-fiqh and its proposed methodology followed a difficult course and became embroiled in technicality that had adverse consequences for *ijti-*

had. What is needed now is to recapture the purity of this vital concept, to make *ijtihad* as our principal instrument for originality and healthy adjustment, but also to revise and reform some aspects of the theory of *ijtihad* itself that are no longer responsive to the prevailing conditions and challenges of our time.

I have elsewhere discussed the theory of *ijtihad* and its related issues and space here does not permit engagement in detail.[29] Yet I conclude this section by suggesting, however briefly, that the conventional theory of *ijtihad* needs to be revised and reformed in respect of the need:

1) to recognize the validity of collective and consultative *ijtihad* (*ijtihad jama'i*) side by side with that of *ijtihad* by individual scholars;

2) to allow experts in other fields such as science, economics, and medicine to carry out *ijtihad* in their respective fields if they are equipped with adequate knowledge of the source evidence of Islam. They may alternatively sit together with, or seek advice from, those learned in *Shariah.*

Ijtihad has in the past been often used as an instrument of diversity and disagreement rather than of unity and consensus. Although disagreement must admittedly be allowed in principle, yet there is a greater need today for unity and consensus. Scholars and learned bodies should not perhaps encourage excessive engagement in diversity of schools and sects but try to find ways that would help to close the gap between them and encourage unity on principles. This may require policy guidelines for different settings and countries, and, if so, that should be reflected in our approaches to *ijtihad.* Certain guidelines may also be provided by thinkers and leaders to stimulate consensus-oriented *ijtihad* within the ranks of the judiciary and legislative assemblies.

Ijtihad has in the past been conceived basically as a legal concept and methodology. Our understanding of the source evidence on *ijtihad* does not specify such a framework for *ijtihad.* Rather, we think of the original conception of *ijtihad* as a problem-solving formula for the problems encountered by individual Muslims and the Muslim community. This would confirm our view of the need to broaden the scope of *ijtihad* to other disciplines beyond the framework of *fiqh* and *usul al-fiqh.*

According to a legal maxim of Islamic jurisprudence, there should be no *ijtihad* in the presence of a clear text of the Quran and Hadith (*la ijtihad ma'al-nass*). This maxim should also be revised. This is because of the possibility that the text in question could now be seen in a different light and given a fresh interpretation in a different context. What we are saying is that the legal text may need to be understood first and that by itself may involve *ijtihad.* Hence *ijtihad* may not be precluded if it could advance a fresh understanding of the text in the first place.

The persistent decline of critical reason among Muslims is due partly to the notion that the exercise of personal judgment and *ijtihad* ceased with the epoch-making works of the legists and imams of the past. Added to this is the

prevailing mindset that a Muslim should follow one or the other of the established schools of thought and abandon his judgment in favor of interpretations of the earlier centuries whose originators could have no conception of the necessities of the twenty-first century Muslims. Until about 1500 CE, independent *ijtihad* allowed Muslims and Muslim societies to continually adapt in the face of changing societal conditions and new advances in knowledge.

Unfortunately, as Muslim civilization began to weaken about four centuries ago in the face of Western advances, Muslims began to adopt a more conservative stance in an attempt to preserve traditional values and institutions. As a result Muslim thinkers became inclined to view innovation and adaptation negatively. For all the rhetoric and symbolic form of the neo-radicals that tend to dominate the audience of Muslims, the spirit of Islam is often palpably missing from their endeavors, while more than ever *ijtihad* is needed where women, education, and politics are concerned.

ISLAM AND THE WEST

Scientific rationality essentially reduces intelligence to the level of neural chemistry where mental and behavioral phenomena are understood merely as manifestations of physical processes. It tends to deprive us of our noblest dimensions (faith, love, beauty), separates the soul from the body, and the sensory from the intelligible. In the realm of economics, we are merely a producer and consumer of goods and is moved solely by our individual self-interest. This too is opposed to the Islamic viewpoint which also sees in us morality and transcendent faith.

This physicalist analysis of intelligence is now increasingly being seen as conceptually inadequate. The real question is whether one may admit a human dimension which is autonomous and irreducible to a physical mass. In Moravia's phrase "can one posit something which exists and yet at the same time is non physical? Do the rejection of the soul and the achievements attained by bio and neurosciences oblige us to hold that man is nothing but body?"[30] Recently these have been attempted by some creative thinkers to reconceptualize intentions of 'reason' and 'intelligence' along anti-materialistic lines drawing on the experience of older non-Western traditions, or even popular folk conceptions.[31]

Islamic philosophy—which mainly studies purposes, as against science which mainly studies causes—sees, in line with the Quranic teaching, the role of objects and events as signs of divine presence and action. Faith is understood by Muslims not as a limitation on science but as its vista for enrichment and perfection.[32]

The variant perspectives of Western philosophy and science are also behind the Western puzzlement why Muslims have not become more secularized. This unwarranted assumption has in the past led to mistaken assessments of Islam and continues to foster genuine misunderstanding concerning the real

nature of Islamic religion and intellectual traditions. The misunderstanding is unfortunately not unique to Westerners. For the majority of Muslims today are also woefully uninformed of the depth and scope of their rich heritage on the authoritative validity of reason. Thinking Muslims should work to vindicate the symbiotic relation of faith and reason in their religion and see it as a source of enrichment and contribution of Islam to human understanding and civilization.

CONCLUSION

This essay advanced a Quranic perspective on thinking, which is affirmative in critical and goal-oriented thinking and also provides a set of guidelines that ensures its purity and purpose from negative reductionist influences. The guidelines so provided are also rich in advancing a spiritual dimension with the understanding that thinking which is not informed by morality and faith can lose its direction and purpose and can even become harmful to human welfare. From the Quranic vantage point, the sciences of nature should be key to our cognition of the signs of God in the universe. For this may be instrumental in solving individual and social problems without interrupting the cosmic order and the human habitat on earth. The blatant disregard of ethical values in science has weakened scientists' sense of responsibility and contributed to the degradation of the human condition on the globe.

Since thinking is a skill that can be advanced by self-application and training, it is amenable to guidance, bereavement, and enrichment. Universities and institutions of learning in Muslim countries are generally short of resources, and those who have the means still fall short, to their detriment, of nurturing the culture of reading and research among their students and scholars. Centers of higher learning may do well to establish a new order of relationship between the natural sciences and humanities, and between all fields of knowledge and human welfare and also the avenues of benefit to society. The present-day education system is due for a reappraisal in order to instill creative thinking and breadth of vision among students and scholars that is informed by the inter-relatedness of the various disciplines of learning. This could be done, as one observer suggested, "by adding sufficient number of courses in humanities to the science and engineering curricula, by cross-disciplinary interaction and collaboration."[33] The main characteristic of the human sciences, from the Islamic perspective, is that they are not value-free and have to be incorporated within the value system of Islam that is informed by the ethical and human dimension of values.

It is ironic to note, however, that the vast majority of Muslims are wont to rote reading of the Quran which is patently vacuous and devoid of thinking. The Quran is usually read, committed to memory, and cited for its spiritual merit rather than intellectual stimulation and enrichment. This is evidently not the advice one obtains from the Quran itself Al-Qaradawi has rightly observed

about the current realities of public education in Muslim countries that "the system relies on memorization and cramming more than it does on comprehension and analysis. A typical weakness of this method is that the memorizer forgets as soon as the exams are over. But if what is learned is founded in understanding and comprehension, its substance will remain in the mind and will not be prone to oblivion so quickly."[34]

But the issue that we raise here is well-entrenched and originates in the overall emphasis that most educationists and jurists of earlier times have placed on the study of the Quran, Hadith and *fiqh* manuals, often calling attention to words and sentences of the text at the expense of comprehension and analysis. The basic approach to Quran studies thus emphasized correct pronunciation and memorization. This repetitive system of learning was particularly pronounced in the context of child education, although it was not confined to this framework as other and more advanced levels of Islamic scholarship also bore the same influence.[35]

Notwithstanding the profound influence of the Quran on the thoughts, mores, and cultures of Muslim individuals and societies, thinking by its nature does not lend itself to any predetermined framework and guideline. It seems that the Quran also seeks only to provide signs and signposts on thinking, but the subjective and innately individual bent of thinking is often inspired by imagination and insight which cannot be encapsulated by definitions and guidelines. A creative mind is unique by its attributes, and thinking that originates in a learned and upright individual is one of the greatest gifts of creation that can itself fit the description of divine example, or sign, of God on earth.

It remains to be added though that imaginative thinking has also been sparkled by sources and influences among great Muslim thinkers of other cultures and traditions—just as we note also that the great thinkers of history emerged in all regions, cultures, and religions. The substance of these statements is upheld in a renowned Hadith in which the Prophet instructed the Muslims to "seek knowledge, even unto China," and in another Hadith that "wisdom is the lost property of the believer; he is entitled to it wherever he finds it."

Knowledge and wisdom must therefore be ultimately seen as the shared achievements of humanity, endowed and posited by its outstanding and creative thinkers. This is also known from the fact that the outcomes of creative thinking are often shared and experienced far beyond geographical locales and frontiers—more so perhaps in the age of globalization.

It is hoped that the great thinkers and leaders of humanity make it a part of their agenda and commitment to narrow down the distances and divides between the intellectual and cultural traditions of the world and aspire them to the veritable vision of a shared destiny and wider human fraternity in their deliberations.

Mohammad Hashim Kamali[36]

PREVIEW *BOOK YEAR 8*

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

The Lessons in *Book Year 1* through *Book Year 24*, including *Book Year 8* presented here, are numbered consecutively in order of the revelation of a Quranic Chapter. Here, in *Book Year 8*, we begin with Lesson 57, that is, Quran Chapter 31 which is the 57th Chapter revealed followed by Quranic Chapters 34, 39, 40 and, finaly Lesson 61 with Quranic Chapter 41 which is the 61st chapter revealed.

The chronological order of the chapters of the Quran that follow throughout the series is based on the list accepted by al-Azhar University in Cairo[1] and is considered to be the official order. It differs greatly from the chronological order developed by Western scholars over the centuries and is much more detailed.

Quranic signs or verses (*ayat*) of each section (*ruku*) in a particular Quranic chapter are given in each lesson followed by a commentary. A short paragraph describes the Eight Elements of Reason and then a paragraph titled Example of How Quranic Critical Thinking Works. The paragraph that comes after this is for the student to determine which of the statements are one of the Eight Elements of Reasoning. Each Lesson ends with a Student Self-assessment.

We do not have a great deal of detailed information about the life of the Prophet Muhammad during the Makkah period. The information that we have falls in the various lessons. Appendix 1 correlates the original Quranic chapters with their chronological order.

PRELUDE: ECONOMIC SANCTIONS AGAINST THE HASHIM CLAN

COMMUNICATIONS CUT OFF

The Quraysh who had opposed the Prophet's message entered into a confederacy against the Hashimites—that they would not marry their women, nor give their own in marriage to them; that they would sell nothing to them, nor buy aught from them; and that dealings with them of every kind should cease.[1]

THE BAN

The ban was carefully committed to writing, and sealed with three seals. When all had bound themselves by it, the record was hung up in the Kabah, and religious sanction thus given to its provisions.

The Hashimites were unable to withstand the tide of public opinion which was set violently against them. Apprehensive perhaps that it might be only the prelude of open attack, or of blows in the dark still more fatal, they retired into the secluded quarter of the valley known as Shib of Abu Talib.

THE SHIB OR QUARTER OF ABU TALIB

The Shib was formed by one of the defiles or indentations of the mountains, where the projecting rocks of Abu Quraysh pressed upon the eastern outskirts of Makkah. It was entered on the city side by a low gateway, through which a camel passed with difficulty. On all other sides it was detached from the town by cliffs and buildings.

HASHIMITES WITH MUHAMMAD TO RETIRE INTO THE SHIB (616-617 CE)

On the first night of the first month, Muharram, of the eighth year of the revelation of Muhammad, the Hashimites, including the Prophet and his family, retired into the quarter of Abu Talib. With them followed also the descendants of al-Muttalib, the brother of Hashim. The ban of separation was put rigorously in force. The Hashimites soon found themselves cut off from their food supplies and other necessities of life. A great scarcity ensued. The failing stock of the Hashimites, replenished only by occasional and surreptitious ventures, reduced them to want and distress. The citizens could hear the wailing of the famished children within the Shib. Among the relatives of the isolated band were found some who ventured, in spite of threats of the Quraysh, to introduce from time to time provisions by stealth at night, into the quarter of Abu Talib.

THEIR DISTRESS

At the beginning of the siege, Ali was sixteen years old. He was charged with the difficult and dangerous duty of feeding the whole clan. He discharged this duty at great risk to his life. He brought water and grain whenever he could find any. For one goatskin of water, he had to pay one piece of gold. He considered himself lucky if he succeeded in bringing it to the ravine. His efforts, however, brought only partial relief to the beleaguered clan.

Abu Talib himself did not sleep at night. For him the physical safety of his nephew took precedence over everything else. When Muhammad fell asleep, Abu Talib woke him up, and asked him to sleep in the bed of one of his four sons, and ordered his son to sleep in Muhammad's bed. A little later, he would wake his nephew again, and ask him to go to the bed of another of his sons.

He spent the whole night shifting Muhammad out of one bed and putting him in another. He had no illusions about his enemies. They were tenacious, treacherous, vicious and vindictive. He, therefore, did not underestimate them. If one of them crept into the ravine with the intention of killing Muhammad, he would most probably kill one of the sons of Abu Talib. Abu Talib and his wife were ever ready to sacrifice their sons for Muhammad.

There were times when Ali, notwithstanding his daring and his resourcefulness, was unable to find any provision. The children and the adults all went hungry. But going hungry and thirsty was a norm in the ravine. When water was available, mothers boiled dead leaves in it to comfort their crying children. The cry of hungry children could be heard outside the ravine, and Abu Jahl and the Umayyads responded to it with derisive laughter. They gloated over their 'triumph' in making the children of the Hashim Clan cry for water and food.

The most precious gift for the besieged clans during these three years, was water. Water was the gift of life. The two clans received it from Khadija. She gave Ali the pieces of gold with which he bought water. Her concern for those around her manifested itself in various ways. She prayed to God and invoked His mercy upon the besieged. Prayer was her 'strategy' for handling adversity. It was, she found, a simple but effective strategy.

Occasionally, the few friends that the members of the Hashim Clan had in Makkah, tried to smuggle food into the ravine, but if the pagans caught it, they seized it.

One of the friends of Hashim Clan in Makkah was Hisham ibn Amr al-Amiri. He brought food and water for them as often as he

could. The time he had chosen to deliver the provisions into the ravine was a few hours before daybreak. Eventually the Quraysh caught him, and they threatened to kill him if he persisted in bringing his loaded camels to the ravine for Hashim clan.

Another secret friend of Hashim clan was Hakim ibn Hizam, the nephew of Khadija. He and his servant carried food and water to Khadija which she immediately gave to the children.

Abu al-Bukhtari was one of the friends of Hakim. He too brought essential supplies to Hashim clan. One night he and Hakim were driving a camel to the ravine when they were surprised by Abu Jahl. He told them that he was going to confiscate the provisions and the camel. At first, Abu al-Bukhtari tried to conciliate him with words but he didn't want to hear anything. He barred the access to the ravine and refused to let them pass. Abu al-Bukhtari tried to force his way past Abu Jahl, and this led to a violent fist fight between them. Brawls like this erupted quite frequently near the ravine but the few friends that the clan of Hashim clan had in the city, did not lose heart, and did everything they could to bring succor to it.

Hisham bin Amr al-Amiri, Hakim bin Hizam, and Abu al-Bukhtari, were not Muslims but they did not want to see any child or even a servant of the Hashim clan perish from hunger, and they risked their own lives time and again in bringing food and water to the Shib of Abu Talib. They were also very happy to pay the bill for such relief operations for three years, and all they sought in return was the safety of the besieged clans.

It should be pointed out here that the hatred and anger of the Umayyad clan of the Quraysh idolaters was directed not against the Muslims but against the Hashim Clan. Their aim was to destroy Islam. But they could not destroy Islam without killing Muhammad. They made numerous attempts to kill him, but they failed because he was beyond their reach. He was safe in the fortress which Abu Talib and the Hashim clan had built for him.

The Umayyads rightly pinpointed the Hashim Clan as responsible for all their failures and frustrations in their war on Islam, and never condoned it for checkmating them in their long and bitter struggle against it.

As for the Muslims who did not belong to the clan of Hashim clan, there were many, and they were all in Makkah. They did not go to Shib of Abu Talib with the Hashim Clan. Some among them are said to have been rich, powerful and influential, and all of them claimed that they loved their Prophet; but curiously, not one of them ever came to see him much less bring any aid to him, during the three

years of siege. They enjoyed the comfort and security of their homes in the city for three years while their Prophet, Muhammad Mustafa, lived on the edge of a sword, surrounded by enemies thirsting for his blood, and in a state of unmitigated suspense never knowing what terrors the next day or the next night might bring to him and to his clan.

OTHER ACCOUNTS OF THE ECONOMIC SANCTIONS

A few years later Fatima, the wife of Abu Talib, like the rest of the Hashim and Abd al-Muttalib tribes, were isolated in Makkah and confined to an area in the valley of her husband. The Quraysh idolaters had held a meeting and drawn up a document to boycott the Hashim and Abd al-Muttalib Clans after they saw things moving against them, namely, the Messenger's companions had settled in Abyssinia in peace and safety; Hamza and Umar had become a Muslim; they were both now on the side of the Messenger; and Islam had begun to spread among the tribes.

The Quraysh agreed in the document not to marry the women of the Hashim or Abd al-Muttalib Clans nor give their women to them to marry nor buy from them nor sell to them. They hung the document up in the middle of the Kabah to remind them of their obligations. As a result, the two clans joined with Fatima bint Asad and her husband, Abu Talib, in his valley. The families were imprisoned with the exception of Abu Lahab who joined with the enemy.

Men, women, and children were placed indiscriminately in the hot, dry valley. The notice written by Abu Jahl in the name of the Quraysh aristocrats and hung on the Kabah wall said: No one is to have any contact with the Hashim or Abd al-Muttalib clans. All relationships with them are cut-off. Do not buy anything from them. Do not sell anything to them. Do not marry any of them.

THROUGH THE VIEW OF FATIMA BINT ASAD

Fatima bint Asad, mother of Ali ibn Abi Talib and wife of Abu Talib who cared for the Messenger for seventeen years, along with the rest of her family faced this economic and social boycott. They were forced to live in a rocky prison so that loneliness, poverty, hunger, and the difficulties of life would make them surrender to either the Quraysh idols or death! They had no choice but to bear the torture—both those who had become Muslim like herself and those who had not as yet accepted the faith.

Even those who had not as yet become Muslim from these families put up a united front towards the enemies in order to preserve

their family honor. They had faith in Muhammad as a good person: He sought no personal gain. He had a sense of faith and commitment. He did not present himself as being superior to them even though they had not accepted his faith. He acted justly towards all without demanding justice for himself.

Fatima also knew in her heart that people like the members of her family who had still not accepted Islam but were willing to bear the hunger and thirst along with her and those members of her family who had accepted Islam, were worth far more than the idol-worshipping intellectuals who sat around the Kabah filled with fear. The intellectuals spoke about philosophy and charity, but when they were presented with a progressive ideology, they refused to accept because it meant being equal with POW/slaves and the deprived. These intellectuals she had seen and listened to spoke about class equality while choosing to act in a way that would protect the wealth of their fathers in order to continue to live in luxury. They chose to act to protect their social position and to avoid opposing the unjust status quo. These intellectuals Fatima had observed preferred to remain on the side of Abu Jahl and Abu Lahab. They watched the torture of Bilals, Ammars, and Khabbabs and the martyrdom of Sumayya and Yasirs without raising a hand to object.

Living in isolation in the hot, dry valley, Fatima also sensed a new faith had alighted upon her spirit and that of the other believers. The wonders of being human had become clear to her with the appearance of this new movement in her society which was full of danger. She intuited the basis of the movement—experiment, choice, and obligatory disciplines. She could now speak of herself and her responsibilities towards her fellow human beings clearly and without deceit. The liberation she sensed made her aware of both her strengths and her weaknesses. All these things were hidden within the spirit of the movement and yet, wonder upon wonder, it was these very hidden things which were revealed.

Now, in this frightening compound, there were people who were not Muslims and yet they bore the difficulties with patience, silence, and three years of hunger and loneliness. They lived in the shadows of danger. They also took part in God's great revolution of humanity. In this most sensitive moment of the beginning of the history of Islam, they shared the pain, having understood the position of Muhammad and his companions.

The families of the Hashim and Abd al-Muttalib clans were cut off for three years from their city, their people, their freedom, and even their means of livelihood. They were made to live in this con-

finement. Was it possible to leave the valley in the middle of the night and, hidden from the eyes of the spies of the Quraysh, get some food for the hungry who were waiting in jail? Could it be that a conscience-stricken family member or friend might, out of kindness, bring them some bread? Hunger sometimes reached the point that they took on the image of 'death,' but as they had prepared themselves for martyrdom, they were patient. Sad ibn Abi Waqqas, who was confined with the others, wrote: Hunger has brought on such dizziness that if at night I kick at a soft and wet material, without even realizing it, I put it in my mouth and suck it. Two years later I still do not know what it was.

One could see under these conditions what passed for the family of the Messenger even if history had said nothing. All of these families bore the difficulties of hunger, loneliness, and poverty for the sake of the Messenger. They patiently bore the cry of a child from the pain of hunger. They remained calm when a sick person moaned in pain from the lack of medicine and food. When an aged person reached the limits of endurance, they said nothing to the Messenger, so as not to cause him greater anguish.

At the same time, in spite of all of the difficulties, they remained loyal and generous in faith and love. All of this showed the expressions of the spirit, of faith, and of human life which greatly affected the sensitive heart of the Messenger. Know for sure that whenever food arrived in the darkness of the night and it was given into the hands of the Messenger to be spread among the people, the share of his wife and daughter was least of all, in order that they not fear for their lives.

The days passed with difficulty in this compound. At night the black tent of darkness fell upon the residents of this mountainous area separated from the life of the city. Weeks, months, and years passed with hardship. They passed slowly over their tired bodies and spirits, but all continued to step in sympathy with each other and with the Messenger.

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And through all of this, the Quranic revelations continued to be sent down on the Prophet/Messenger for his Hashim and Abd al-Muttalib followers. Those early Muslims from other tribes against whom sanctions had not been imposed were not to hear these revelations as they were being revealed. In spite of suffering from hunger and thirst, the spirits of those Muslims isolated in the valley of Abu Talib remained high throughout this ordeal.

LESSON 57(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY UTILIZING CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS, PRINCIPLES, VOCABULARY

WHAT IS A CONCEPT?

What is a concept? A concept is an idea or thought, especially a generalized idea of a thing or of a class of things. The Quranic text expresses clusters of concepts or ideas. It is these concepts that it uses that students need to learn to identify, contrast them with other of its concepts and clarify what they mean and what students include and exclude because of them. Quranic clusters of concepts include, for example, types of people: believer-disbelievers-ungrateful-hypocrites, living-creation; false-deity concept; sacred text concept. The latter, sacred text concept includes four concepts: The Quran itself, the Gospel, the Torah (the first five books of the Bible also known as the Pentateuch revealed to Moses), and the Psalms.

QURANIC CHAPTER 31: LUQMAN (LUQMAN) SIGNS 31:1-31:11

Makkah: *Alif Lam Mim.* (31:1)
There are the signs of the wise Book, (31:2)
a guidance and a mercy to the ones who are doers of good, (31:3)
those who perform the formal prayer
and give the purifying alms
and they are certain of the world to come. (31:4)
Those are on a guidance from their Lord.
And those, they are the ones who prosper. (31:5)
And of humanity is he who exchanges diversionary conversation
to cause others to go astray from the way of God
without any knowledge.
And he takes it to himself in mockery.
Those, for them will be a despised punishment. (31:6)
When Our signs are recounted to him,
he turned as one who grows arrogant,
as if he had not been hearing them,
as if there had been heaviness in his ears.
So give him the good tidings of a painful punishment. (31:7)
Truly, those who believed and did
as the ones in accord with morality,
for them are Gardens of Bliss, (31:8)
ones who will dwell in them forever.
The promise of God is true.

And He is The Almighty, The Wise. (31:9)
He created the heavens without any pillars
so that you see the heavens.
And He cast firm mountains on the earth
so that the earth should not vibrate with you.
And He disseminated in and on it of all moving creatures.
And We caused water to descend from heaven.
We caused all generous, diverse pairs to develop in it. (31:10)
This is the creation of God.
Then, cause me to see what other than He created?
Nay! The ones who are unjust
are clearly wandering astray. (31:11)

COMMENTARY°

A BOOK OF WISDOM

The section begins with three separate letters which are then described as: *there are the signs of the wise Book.* (31:2) This serves to emphasize that the signs of this book are composed of letters of the same sort. The book is described here as being wise because it is repeatedly mentioned in this chapter. Hence, it is fitting, in the normal method of the Quran, that this particular aspect of the book is emphasized in this context. Moreover, speaking of the book as being wise gives it connotations of life and will. It is as though the book itself is a living creature which is wise in what it says and the way it directs people to behave. It chooses its objective and serves it. This is indeed true of the book as it has life, spirit, movement and a distinctive personality. Furthermore, it provides friendly companionship, one which is felt by those who live with it and under its shade. They relate to it and have a mutual response with it just like close friends.

This book, which is wise, provides *a guidance and a mercy to the ones who are doers of good.* This is its essential and permanent status: providing guidance so that goodly people can follow the right way. Indeed, travelers who follow its way are never in error. This book also provides people with mercy as they feel reassured and contented by the guidance they are given. They feel God's mercy as they attain success, establish firm bonds and strong mutual commitments among those who follow such guidance, and also between them and the laws of the universe in which they live.

The ones who excel in doing good are those who *those who perform the formal prayer and give the purifying alms and they are certain of the world to come.* (31:4) Such people attend regularly to

prayers, and offer them in full, on time and in the right manner. This fulfils the purpose of those prayers and enhances their effect on feelings and behavior. Thus prayer creates a very strong bond with God, one which spreads an air of pleasantness on life as a whole. Giving generously in charity enables the giver to rise above the natural instinct to hold on to things. It helps to establish a social system based on mutual cooperation where both the affluent and the deprived find confidence and reassurance, as well as genuine mutual care. Certainty of the hereafter ensures that believers stay alert, seeking what God will give, and resisting the lure of all worldly comforts and luxuries. Furthermore, it keeps the believer heedful of what God desires, in public and private, in matters small or large. Thus he aims to achieve excellence in doing good, or *ihsan*, which the Prophet defined as: To worship God as though you see Him; if you do not see Him, remember that He sees you.[2]

Those who attend to prayer, give in charity and are certain of the hereafter: *Those are on a guidance from their Lord. And those, they are the ones who prosper.* (31:5) Whoever accepts divine guidance will be successful. Such a person moves along with enlightenment which leads him to his goal. He is thus free from error in this life and from the consequences of error in the life to come. He has reassurance, comfort, and friendly interaction with all that exists.

THE OTHER PARTY

And of humanity is he who exchanges diversionary conversation to cause others to go astray from the way of God without any knowledge. (31:6) Such people would pay money, time and life to buy such idle talk. How high the price, and cheap the commodity in which such people spend their lives. They buy such talk *to cause others to go astray from the way of God without any knowledge.* (31:6) They are truly ignorant. Their action is neither based on sound knowledge, nor aims for a wise objective. They have bad intentions and aims. They want to use such idle talk to lead themselves and others astray from God's path. They are ill-mannered, ridicule God's path, and mock the way God has laid down for people's lives. Hence, the Quran issues a strong warning to such people. It shows them as contemptible, even before it completes their picture: *Those, for them will be a despised punishment.* (31:6) The description of their suffering as shameful is deliberate for this replies to their mocking of the divine way of life.

Painting the image of this other party is then resumed: *When Our signs are recounted to him, he turned as one who grows arro-*

gant, as if he had not been hearing them, (31:7) The image here is full of movement, showing this person as arrogant, turning away in pride. He is, therefore, decorated with shame and this makes us look at him with contempt: *as if there had been heaviness in his ears.* (31:7) It is this heaviness that stops him from listening to God's signs. No person listens to these divine signs and then turns away so arrogantly. This description is completed with further ridicule: *So give him the good tidings of a painful punishment.* (31:7) The sign uses here the term *bashshir*, which connotes the giving of happy news. Its usage adds further ridicule.

Those believers who have translated their faith into good action: *Truly, those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality, for them are Gardens of Bliss.* (31:9) Their admission to heaven and their abode there simply fulfils God's true promise. The grace God bestows on His servants means that He commits Himself to reward them generously for what they do for themselves, not for Him, as He is in no need of anyone. *And He is The Almighty, The Wise.* (31:9) He is certainly able to fulfil His promise, and He is wise in all that He does, including creation, promise and fulfilment.

SIGNS OF WISDOM

The ultimate proof of God's might, wisdom and all other issues mentioned in the chapter is the great universe, whose creation no human being ever claims for himself or for anyone other than God.

This reference to the limitless space: *He created the heavens without any pillars so that you see the heavens* is made quickly and briefly, before we are returned straight to earth which is no more than a tiny particle when compared to the great universal expanse.

Yet we see the earth as huge indeed: No person can traverse it all, even though he spends his life in continuous travel. Thus, the section returns us to earth so we contemplate it with open minds, and without the effects of familiarity that cloud our vision: *And He cast firm mountains on the earth so that the earth should not vibrate with you.* (31:10)

God: *We caused all generous, diverse pairs to develop in it.* (31:10) This is one of the great wonders of existence. *And We caused water to descend from heaven. We caused all generous, diverse pairs to develop in it.* (31:10) Sending rain down from the sky is yet another universal wonder which we take for granted, oblivious to what is involved. The water that runs in rivers, fills up lakes, or bursts out in springs comes from the sky according to a carefully planned system that, in turn, is linked to the regulation of the heavens and the

earth, their relative distances, natures and formations.

That plants and their pairs are described as 'goodly' imparts a significant feeling, making it suited as God's creation. Therefore, it is raised in front of our eyes: *This is the creation of God.* (31:11) And a challenge follows: *Then, cause me to see what other than He created?* (31:11) Then follows the comment: *Nay! The ones who are unjust are clearly wandering astray.* (31:11) What could be worse than wrongdoing and the error of associating partners with God when looking at God's great and universal creation?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

DRAW A CONCEPT MAP

Alternatives to outlining are concept-mapping.

HOW DO I MAP?

First reject the idea of an outline, or of paragraphs using sentences.

Think in terms of key words or symbols that represent ideas and words:

CONCEPT MAPPING:

This is a type of brainstorming where you place the title/subject as the main idea, then develop a "mind map" around it. It can be effective either in a group or by yourself:

PRE-QUESTIONS:

Often chapters in texts provide organizing questions.
You can also write out a series of questions you expect to be answered when reading: Examples:

DEFINITION:

What is....?
Where does ... fit?
What group does ... belong to?

CHARACTERISTICS:

How would I describe...?

What does ... look like?
What are its parts?

VISUAL AIDS

Pictures and other visual material can activate your prior knowledge. Use the Internet to search for pictures related to your title/topic to give you visual images of what you are about to read.

How would your rate yourself? Can you give examples for the following:

EXAMPLES

What is a good example of ...?
What are similar examples that share attributes but differ in some way?

EXPERIENCE

What experience have I had with ....?
What can I imagine about ...?

QURANIC CHAPTER 31: LUQMAN (LUQMAN)
SIGNS 31:12-31:19

Makkah: Book 28: Luqman (31:12)
Makkah: Book 28: Luqman (31:13)
Makkah: Book 28: Luqman (31:14)
Makkah: Book 28: Luqman (31:15)
Makkah: Book 28: Luqman (31:16)
Makkah: Book 28: Luqman (31:17)
Makkah: Book 28: Luqman (31:18)
Makkah: Book 28: Luqman (31:19)

Lesson 57(2). Critical Thinking Strategy Comparing Analogous Situations: Reframing Insights to New Contexts

In comparing analogous situations and transferring insights to new contexts, the example of the pilgrimage to Makkah and the Kabah comes to mind.

The Arabs had been practicing the pilgrimage for centuries. While the pilgrimage had been originally established by Abraham and his son, Ishmael for the worship of the One God, over time, the beliefs changed. People would still perform the pilgrimage to Makkah and the Kabah, but now the Kabah was filled with idols whom they worshipped. It became their custom to circumambulate the Kabah naked.

The life of the Prophet, so important in Islam, consist of the words which he spoke, the laws he brought, the deeds he performed, things he remained silent about or did not disagree with and deeds he actually performed in his lifetime without telling others that they should themselves perform them. The Traditions of the Prophet, then, are his words and his conduct. These become the rules of Islam which are divided into two groups: first, those which existed before Islam but were confirmed by the Prophet (signed rules); second, those which had not existed previously but were established by Islam (created rules). Besides these signed and created rules and the words and deeds of the Prophet, a third principle can also be perceived. It is my belief that it is the most sensitive. It is the method that the Prophet used.

The Prophet preserved the form, the container of a custom which had deep roots in society, one which people had gotten used to from generation to generation and one which was practiced in a natural manner, but he changed the contents, the spirit, the direction and the practical application of customs in a revolutionary, decisive and immediate manner.

He was inspired by a particular method which he uses in social combat. Without producing negative results, without containing any of the weak points of the other methods, his method contained the positive characteristics of the others. Through the customs of society which apply the brakes, he quickly attained his social goals. His revolutionary method was this: he maintained the container of a social tradition but inwardly changed the contents.

Before Islam, there was a custom of total ablution that was both a belief and a superstition. The pre-Islamic Arabs believed that when

a person had sexual intercourse, he or she incarnated jinn (spirits which inhabit the earth), thereby rendering both body and soul unclean. Until he or she found water and performed a total ablution, the jinn could not be exorcised.

Another example is the pilgrimage to Makkah. Before Islam, it was an Arab custom, full of superstitious ancestor worship. It was a glorified type of idol worship, holding economic advantage for the Quraysh tribe whereby the Kabah was filled with idols that were worshiped by the people. It had gradually come to assume this form from the time of Abraham. The Prophet was commanded to keep the form of the pre-Islamic custom of pilgrimage, as Abraham, the Friend of God, had built the Kabah for the worship of the One God, but through God's guidance, he changed the content. Now the pilgrimage was practiced to worship the One God.

The basis of the pilgrimage had been twofold: To protect the economic interests of the Quraysh merchants in Makkah and to create an artificial need among the Arab tribes for the Quraysh nobility. It was revealed to the Prophet of Islam to take this form and change it into a most beautiful and deep rite founded upon the unity of God and the oneness of humanity.

The Prophet, with his revolutionary stand, took the pilgrimage of the idol-worshipping tribes and changed it into a completely opposite rite. It was a revolutionary leap. As a result, while the Quraysh leaders opposed him because of their concern that they would lose their means of income, the Arab people underwent no anguish, no loss of values or beliefs, but rather, revived the truth and cleansed an ancient custom. They moved easily from idol worship to unity. Suddenly, they had left the past. Their society was not aware that the foundations of idol worship had been torn down. This leap, this revolutionary social method found within the (Quranic Sunnah) of the Prophet preserved the outer form, but changed its content. It maintained the container as a permanent element but changed and transformed the content. The Prophet, through the inspired method of his work, showed us that if we understand and can put his method into action, we can behave in a most enlightened and correct way.

A clear-visioned intellectual, confronted by outdated customs, ancient traditions, a dead culture and a stagnant religious and social order, takes up the mandate of the Prophet rather than submit to prejudices from the past. By this method one can reach revolutionary goals without the danger of revolution, on one hand, and without opposing the basis of faith and ancient social values on the other. By doing so, one does not remove oneself from people, nor does one be-

come a stranger on whom people may turn and condemn. This method works because the Prophet received knowledge from the divine Infinite, because he asked for the help of revelation and because he made use of what he received.

It was revealed to the Prophet of Islam to take the form of the pilgrimage and change it into a most beautiful and deep rite founded upon the unity of God and the oneness of humanity.

The conservative, at whatever cost, tries, to the last bit of his strength, to keep his customs—even if it means sacrificing himself and others. The revolutionary, on the other hand, wants to change everything into another form all at once. He wants to annihilate everything, to suddenly jump— whether or not society is prepared to leap in that direction. When the conservative senses the possibility of revolution, he turns to anger, dictatorship, and extensive public murders not only against his enemies but also against the people themselves. A reformer, on the other hand, always gives a corrupter the opportunity to destroy. The Prophet, through the inspired method of his work, showed us that if we understand and can put his method into action, we can behave in a most enlightened and correct way.[3]

The power of a Quranic concept is not limited by the ability you have to use it. Quranic thinkers make use of concepts in order to better their skills in understanding the Quran. It is through practice that they use these concepts by applying them to new situations, that is, by putting the concepts into practice.

Quranic thinkers focus on the basic Quranic concepts. You are encouraged to be able to reframe Quranic concepts, taking the Quranic form and changing the contents in modeling what Prophet Muhammad did.

QURANIC CHAPTER 31: LUQMAN (LUQMAN)
SIGNS 31:20-31:30

Makkah: *Consider you not*
that God caused to become subservient to you
whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in and on the earth
and lavished on you His divine blessing,
that which is manifest and that which is inward
and yet most of humanity is he who disputes about God
without knowledge and with no guidance
and without an illuminating Book. (31:20)
And when it was said to them:
Follow what God caused to descend.
They said: Nay! We will follow what we found our fathers on.

Even if it Satan had been calling them
to the punishment of the blaze? (31:21)
And whoever submits his face to God
while he is one who is a doer of good,
then, surely, he held fast to the most firm handhold.
And to God is the Ultimate End of affairs. (31:22)
And whoever was ungrateful,
let not his ingratitude dishearten you
To Us is their return and We will tell them what they did.
Truly, God is Knowing of what is in the breasts. (31:23)
We give them enjoyment for a little while.
Again, We will compel them to a harsh punishment. (31:24)
And if you had asked them who created the heavens and the earth,
they will certainly say: God! Say: The Praise belongs to God!
But most of them know not. (31:25)
To God belongs whatever is in the heavens and the earth.
Truly, God, He is The Sufficient, The Worthy of Praise. (31:26)
Madinah (31:27)
Madinah (31:28)
Madinah (31:29)
That is because God, He is The Truth
and what they call to other than Him is falsehood.
And that God, He is The Lofty, The Great! (31:30)

COMMENTARY°

Some people are ungrateful, do not reflect on the world around them and do not appreciate the blessings they enjoy: *Yet most of humanity is he who disputes about God without knowledge and with no guidance and without an illuminating Book.* (31:20)

And when it was said to them: Follow what God caused to descend. They said: Nay! We will follow what we found our fathers on. (31:21) This is their only basis and evidence! It is nothing other than blindly following traditions which lack knowledge and intelligent thinking. The Quran wants to free us from such blind imitation, so as to set our minds free. It wants us to be able to think, reflect and benefit by the light, but we adamantly hold on to the chains of their deviant past.

The Quranic message gives us freedom of conscience, active feelings, aspiration for enlightenment and a new way of life that is free of blind tradition. Yet such people turn their backs on it, rejecting its light and guidance. They argue about God without knowledge or guidance. Hence, the chapter looks upon them with ridicule, making

a subtle reference to the end such attitudes lead to: *Even if it Satan had been calling them to the punishment of the blaze?* (31:21) Indeed their attitude is nothing less than an invitation by Satan leading them to God's punishment. Will they persist with this despite the end which they will be certain to have? This last remark should at least alert them to the difficulty of their position.

The section then refers to the proper attitude that should result from reflecting on the universal evidence and God's countless blessings: *And whoever submits his face to God while he is one who is a doer of good, then, surely, he held fast to the most firm handhold. And to God is the Ultimate End of affairs.* (31:22) Together with good deeds, what is required is total submission to God. One should feel reassured of God's will, obey His commands, fulfil the duties He requires, have confidence in His mercy, trust His care, and so enjoy total contentment. All this is grouped under the heading of submission to God.

And whoever submits his face to God while he is one who is a doer of good (31:22) supports a bond that is never severed or weakened. It never lets down anyone who holds to it, whether in situations of ease or difficulty. No one who holds to it will ever be lost, even though his road is rough, dark and beset by hardships. This firm support is the close, confident link between the submitting believer and his Lord. Thus, whatever comes through God's will is accepted without qualm. It gives the believer the sort of reassurance that keeps him calm and confident as he faces all events. Furthermore, in this way, he is able to rise above comforts, luxuries, difficulties, surprises and all other impediments.

Our journey is long, hard and full of danger. The danger posed by luxury and affluence is no less than that arising from misery and deprivation. Hence the need for firm and ever-present support. The firmest support is that which comes about from submitting oneself to God and doing good deeds. *And to God is the Ultimate End of affairs.* (31:22) With Him all journeys end, and to Him we all return. Hence, it is better for us to submit to Him from the start, so that he moves along our journey with confidence, reassurance and guidance.

This is, by contrast, the end of the ungrateful who is deceived by life's comforts. In this present life, he is shown to the Prophet and the believers as being of no consequence: *And whoever was ungrateful, let not his ingratitude dishearten you.* (31:23) He is too small for you to grieve over. As for his end in the life to come, it is again of no insignificance. He cannot escape God's punishment, when God knows all his actions and intentions: *To Us is their return and We*

will tell them what they did. Truly, God is Knowing of what is in the breasts. (31:23) The enjoyments that deceive such people are small, short in duration, trifling in value, but the results at the end are terrifying. These they cannot escape: *Again, We will compel them to a harsh punishment.* (31:24) The Arabic term, *ghaliz*, used here to describe the suffering, has more physical connotations than 'severe' suggests. Thus the sign imparts a more tangible feeling of the suffering into which they are driven, unable to avoid it. How vastly different the two ends are.

USING THE CREATION ARGUMENT

In its contemplation of the universe, the section puts the ungrateful face to face with the logic of their own nature. In this way, they cannot deny the truth it emphasizes. Yet still there are those who deviate and remain heedless.

Those who associated partners with God, and argued very strongly against the Prophet and his message, could not falsify the argument of their own nature when they were confronted with the universal proof of the creation of the heavens and the earth. Therefore, they did not hesitate in their reply to the question: *And if you had asked them who created the heavens and the earth, they will certainly say: God!* (31:25) Praise is due to God for keeping the truth of the universe and its creation clear in human nature. The argument is discontinued so as to give a new comment: *Say: The Praise belongs to God! But most of them know not.* (31:25) It is because they do not understand that they continue to argue, ignoring the logic of human nature and the fact that the whole universe points to its supreme Creator.

The ssection adds a statement of God's ownership of all that is in the heavens and the earth, whether it is made available to us or not. He is in no need of anything in the heavens or the earth. He is praised even though people may not praise Him: *To God belongs whatever is in the heavens and the earth. Truly, God, He is The Sufficient, The Worthy of Praise.* (31:26)

Thus it is, because God alone is the Ultimate Truth, and all that people invoke beside Him is sheer falsehood, and because God alone is Most High, Great. (31:29-31:30)

That is because God, He is The Truth. (31:30) Everything else changes and alters, increases and decreases, is subject to strengthening and weakening, flourishing and withering. Everything else comes into existence and goes out of it, but God alone is Eternal, unchanging, subject to no transformation or alteration.

Yet there remains in my mind something I have not expressed about the statement: *That is because God, He is The Truth.* It is something that cannot be communicated in words; something which is not in my power to express; something I feel strongly in my heart, yet human language cannot put into words. The same is true of the last statement in this sign: *And that God, He is The Lofty, The Great!* (31:30) Indeed, no one else is high or great. Have I said anything about what works inside me about this Quranic statement? I feel that any human expression of these sublime truths detracts from them. Indeed, the Quranic expression is uniquely inspiring.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

You will begin to see how important and pervasive social definitions are. You will begin to redefine situations in ways that run contrary to some commonly accepted definitions. You will notice then how redefining situations (and relationships) enables you to get in touch with your emotions. You may then recognize that the way you think (that is, define things) generates the emotions you experience. When you think you are threatened (i.e., define a situation as threatening), you feel fear. If you define a situation as a 'failure', you may feel depressed. On the other hand, if you define that same situation as a 'lesson or opportunity to learn' you feel empowered to learn. When you recognize this control that you are capable of exercising, the two strategies begin to work together and reinforce each other.

How would your rate yourself? Do you agree with the following statements?

WHAT IS TOO LITTLE COURAGE?

Cowardice or weakness is an obstacle to courage. It is wrong to show weakness in face of difficulties, to lose heart, to be weak in will, to be weary and faint-hearted, to despair or boast, to be impatient and fretful. It is forbidden to be afraid of men or of Satan and his protectors. It is only Satan who frightens you with his protectors. So fear them not, but fear Me if you had been ones who believe. (3:175)

WHAT IS TOO MUCH COURAGE?

There are certain obstacles which arise out of misuse of courage, that is, too much courage. Warning is given to those people who oppress people with wrong-doing and insolently transgress beyond bounds through the land, defying right and justice. The way is only against those who do wrong to humanity and are insolent in and on the earth unrightfully. *Those, for them is a painful punishment.* (42:42) *It is forbidden to exhibit fierceness: Mention when those who were ungrateful laid zealotry in their hearts, like the zealotry of the Age of Ignorance. Then, God caused to descend His tranquility on His Messenger and on the ones who believe and fastened on them the Word of God-consciousness. They had been with right to it and were more worthy of it;* (48:26) to be arrogant against God: *And rise not up against God. Truly, I am one who arrives with a clear authority* (44:19) for arrogance blinds people to the truth; *and they negated them—although their souls confessed to them—out of injustice and self-exaltation. So look on how had been the Ultimate End of the ones who make corruption;* (27:14) to swell one's cheek with pride, or walk in insolence through the earth: *And turn not your cheek away from humanity nor walk through the earth exultantly. Truly, God loves not any proud boaster* (31:18) for one cannot rend the earth asunder or reach the mountains in height.

Lesson 57(3). Critical Thinking Strategy Developing One's Perspective: Creating or Exploring Arguments

Uncritical thinkers who exhibit selfishness similar to the ungrateful around Prophet Muhammad tended to assume that their own view of things was the only correct way to see the world. They tried to manipulate the views of others to their own advantage.

Fair-minded Quranic thinkers are like our beloved Prophet who followed the way of Prophet Abraham. Prophet Abraham recognized that his own way of thinking and interpreting the world around him required insight and experience through trial and error. He went through a critical analysis of his experience. He questioned the commonly held belief of the people around him. For his part, he explored his own beliefs and his own reasoning and theories. This was essential to his thinking and behavior. Once he experienced this, he was certain of his perspectives and could speak about them with deep insight.

Quranic Chapter 31: Luqman (Luqman) Signs 31:31-31:34

Makkah: *Have you not considered*
that the boats run through the sea
by the divine blessing of God that He causes you to see His signs?
Truly in that are signs for every enduring, grateful one. (31:31)
And when a wave overcame them like an overshadowing,
they called to God as ones who are sincere
and devoted in the way of life to Him.
Then, when He delivered them to dry land among them
are ones who halt between two opinions.
And none negates Our signs
but every ungrateful turncoat. (31:32)
O humanity! Be God-conscious of your Lord,
and dread a Day when recompense will not be given by a child
to one to whom the child is born,
nor will one to whom a child is born
be one who gives recompense
for the one who is born at all.
Truly, the promise of God is True
so let not this present life delude you
nor let the deluder delude you about God. (31:33)
Truly, the knowledge of the Hour is with God.
And He sends plenteous rain water down.
And He knows what is in the wombs.

And no soul is informed of what it will earn tomorrow.
And no soul is informed in what region it will die.
Truly, God is Knowing, Aware. (31:34)

COMMENTARY°

Have you not considered that the boats run through the sea by the divine blessing of God that He causes you to see His signs? Truly in that are signs for every enduring, grateful one. (31:31) Many people are neither patient nor grateful. When harm afflicts them, they raise their voices with prayer. When God lifts harm from them, only a few are truly grateful. *And when a wave overcame them like an overshadowing, they called to God as ones who are sincere and devoted in the way of life to Him. Then, when He delivered them to dry land among them are ones who halt between two opinions. And none negates Our signs but every ungrateful turncoat.* (31:32)

But *when He delivered them to dry land among them are ones who halt between two opinions.* (31:32) Security and comfort do not drive them back to carelessness. They remain mindful of God's bounty and give thanks for it, but they do not do enough to fulfil their duties towards God in thanksgiving. In other words, they are restrained in their thanks.

There are others who deny God's signs once danger is over and security is again felt. *And none negates Our signs but every ungrateful turncoat.* (31:32) Both treachery and unbelief are here described in superlative terms that are nevertheless true of anyone who disbelieves after having seen all the universal indications and listened to the clear arguments about human nature.

THE LURE OF COMFORTABLE LIVING

O humanity! Be God-conscious of your Lord, and dread a Day when recompense will not be given by a child to one to whom the child is born, nor will one to whom a child is born be one who gives recompense for the one who is born at all. (31:33) The horror described here is psychological, measured by its effect on hearts and souls. Nothing severs blood relations and ties between parent and child, and nothing makes everyone preoccupied solely with their own positions unless it be a fear totally unknown to people. The call to fear God, therefore, comes here at the right time, when people are ready to respond. The issue of the hereafter is presented against the background of such great horror so that hearts will listen.

Truly, the promise of God is True. (31:33) It will never fail. There can be no avoidance of this very difficult situation. No one can escape the accurate reckoning and the fair reward, when none can avail

another of anything.

So let not this present life delude you. (31:33) It is full of lure, luxury and comfort, but it is limited in duration, and it is only a test to determine the eventual reward. *So let not this present life delude you nor let the deluder delude you about God.* (31:33) Let no comfort, work, or interest delude you. Above all, let no devil tempt you, for there are many devils, such as money, science, life, power, authority, desire, fancy and passion. Each has its own lure and temptation which can be very deluding. Fear of God and remembrance of the Day of Judgment, however, should be enough to protect believers from all such temptations.

KNOWLEDGE ABSOLUTE

At the end of this presentation, which completes the section, a final note is given, one which is both powerful and awesome. It describes God's perfect and comprehensive knowledge contrasting this with our own limited, human knowledge. It states the question discussed throughout the chapter and presents all this in one of the most wonderful images drawn in the Quran:

Truly, the knowledge of the Hour is with God. And He sends plenteous rain water down. (31:34) God Almighty has chosen to keep the knowledge of the Last Hour to Himself; none knows it other than Him. Thus people will always remain cautious, expecting its arrival at any time, trying to be ready for it. They know that there is no time to lose in preparing for its arrival.

And He knows what is in the wombs. (31:34) This is exclusive knowledge similar to that of the Last Hour. It is God alone who knows, with absolute certainty, what wombs contain at every moment and in every stage, how they swell or shrink, what type of foetus, even when it has no shape, form or size. He further knows the features the foetus will have, its characteristics and future abilities. All this is part of God's exclusive knowledge.

And no soul is informed of what it will earn tomorrow. (31:34) No one knows what will happen to them tomorrow: good or bad, benefit or harm, ease or hardship, health or sickness, obedience to God or disobedience. 'Earning' is far more general than material gain. It applies to everything that happens to a person tomorrow, which is kept hidden under thick covers. People may try to discover this, but they will always fail, remaining unable to discern anything beyond those covers.

Similarly, *And no soul is informed in what region it will die.* (31:34) Such knowledge is kept behind thick blinds which cannot be

penetrated by hearing or seeing. *Truly, God is Knowing, Aware.* (31:34)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions,** (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Learn to take interdisciplinary philosophical, socio-political, scientific and Quranic concepts and opinions, considering them from various angles and points of view without ignoring anything and then examine them carefully. Try to arrive at logical conclusions and put aside all that fails in its logic. Your perspectives are developed through extended thought, discussion, and writing. You who are unsure what to think can be given time to reflect and come to tentative conclusions. You who have definite conclusions about the subject at hand can consider ideas from other perspectives, answer questions about what you think, or reflect on new situations or problems. You can compare what you say you believe with how you act. You can raise basic and important questions about what you learn, discovering and discussing underlying principles in your thought.

Have you tried the strategy below? How would your rate yourself?

One-to-one questioning may facilitate development of perspective, especially for those who think they've exhausted their ideas. This strategy will also often coincide with evaluating actions and policies, arguments, or assumptions.You could explain how what you have learned from the Quranic signs has changed your thinking in some way. During classroom discussions, you should raise points made during study. You should relate your general ideas to specifics you have studied, explore important questions, and integrate the Quranic details.

LESSON 58(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

Quranic knowledge can be divided into multiple categories as this knowledge served as the basis for the development of Islamic sciences over the centuries. There are concepts that are basic to the study of Anthropology, History, Political Science, Mathematics, Logic and so forth. Understanding the interdisciplinary connections of the Quranic sacred text, take relevant concepts, knowledge and insight from the Quranic signs so that you are continuously finding connections between various categories of knowledge whether it be the basic principles of the arts or science.

Quranic critical thinkers:

> ... do not allow the somewhat arbitrary distinctions between academic subjects to control their thinking. When considering issues which transcend subjects, they bring relevant concepts, knowledge, and insights from many subjects to the analysis. They make use of insights into one subject to inform their understanding of other subjects. There are always connections between subjects: language and logic; history, geography, psychology, anthropology, physiology; politics, geography, science, ecology; math, science, economics.[4]

INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

Science: In doing research in the sciences, Quranic thinkers record from in depth observation, collecting as much information as possible and then critiquing their analysis of the gathered information so that they can draw the best possible inference through the use of inductive reasoning. He Who taught by the pen. He taught the human being what he knows not. (96:4-96:5)

Politics: Quranic thinkers try to obtain their own inferences after listening to .... what is said and follow the fairer of it. Those are those whom God guided. Those, they are imbued with intuition. (39:17-39:18) After listening to all opinions, they try to arrive at the best of the varying opinions as you differ in what you say. (51:8)

Education: Education in schools after listening to .... what is said and follow the fairer of it calls on students to learn all types of concepts, faiths and ideas and then choose their own.

Psychology: Our ability to reason (our cognitive system: *Will you not be reasonable?*) comes from our rational soul (*nafs-i natiqah*). We use our reason to help us regulate our animal soul (see Quran 12:53; *nafs-i ammarah*), our emotions and behavior by keeping them in a state of equilibrium, balance or moderation, on the Straight Path.

Note for the Teacher: Do not allow the somewhat arbitrary distinctions between academic subjects to control their thinking. When considering issues

which transcend subjects, they bring relevant concepts, knowledge, and insights from many subjects to the analysis. They make use of insights into one subject to inform their understanding of other subjects. There are always connections between subjects: language and logic; history, geography, psychology, anthropology, physiology; politics, geography, science, ecology; math, science, economics.[5]

QURANIC CHAPTER 34: SHEBA (AL-SABA)
SIGNS 34:1-34:9

Makkah: *The Praise belongs to God.*
To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens
and whatever is in and on the earth.
And His is The Praise in the world to come.
And He is The Wise, The Aware. (34:1)
He knows whatever penetrates into the earth
and what goes forth out of it
and what comes down from the heaven
and what goes up to it.
And He is The Compassionate, The Forgiving. (34:2)
And those who were ungrateful said:
The Hour will not approach us.
Say: Yea! By my Lord, it will, certainly, approach you.
He is One Who Knows of the unseen.
Not an atom's weight escapes from Him in the heavens
or in and on the earth, be it smaller than that
or greater, but that it had been in a clear Book (34:3)
that He may give recompense to those who believed
and did as the ones in accord with morality.
Those, for them there is forgiveness
and a generous provision. (34:4)
But those who endeavored against Our signs
as ones who strive to thwart,
those, for them there is a punishment of painful wrath. (34:5)
Madinah (34:6)
Makkah: *Those who were ungrateful said:*
Shall we point you to a man who will tell you
when you were torn to pieces, ones who are totally torn to pieces?
Then, you will be, truly, in a new creation. (34:7)
Devised he a lie against God or is there a madness in him?
Nay! Those who believe not in the world to come
there is a punishment and a going far astray. (34:8)
Consider they not what is in advance of them

and what is behind them
of the heaven and the earth?
If We will, We could cause the earth to swallow them,
or cause to drop on them pieces of heaven.
Truly, in this is a sign for every servant,
one who turns in repentance. (34:9)

COMMENTARY°

WHERE PRAISE IS DUE

This section, which speaks at length about the idolaters who associated partners with God, denied His Messenger, doubted the hereafter and dismissed the idea of resurrection, begins with praising God. All praise is due to Him for being God, even though no human being utters a word of praise addressed to Him. He is praised by the universe and all creation, even though some human beings take a different attitude. Coupled with this is God's attribute of being the Sovereign of the universe. No one has any portion of heaven or earth: He alone owns all there is. This is the central issue of faith: God's Oneness.

The Praise belongs to God. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in and on the earth. And His is The Praise in the world to come. And He is The Wise, The Aware. (34:1) Whatever He does is based on wisdom. Indeed, He conducts the affairs of this life and the Next, and the affairs of the entire universe in perfect wisdom. Moreover, He is aware of everything that takes place, and His knowledge is full, accurate and absolute.

The chapter gives us a notion of God's knowledge, portrayed against the background of heaven and earth: *He knows whatever penetrates into the earth and what goes forth out of it and what comes down from the heaven and what goes up to it. And He is The Compassionate, The Forgiving.* (34:2) This is a vast image drawn in a few simple words, painting an amazing multitude of things, motions, sizes, shapes, forms and meanings that go beyond any imagination. Should all the people on earth spend their entire lives monitoring and recording what takes place in just one moment of the things mentioned in the sign, they would not be able to do so. How many things go into the earth in such a moment? How many leave it? And how many come down from the sky or go up into it?

The chapter then mentions the ungrateful' denial of the inevitability of the Last Hour, even though they are totally unaware what tomorrow will bring. That it will come is certain; it is necessary so that both those who do good and those who do evil should receive their fair reward:

The ungrateful deny the life to come because they do not understand God's wisdom. In His infinite wisdom, He does not let people do what they please, whether good or evil, and then leave them at that, without giving reward to the doers of good and requiting those who do otherwise. He has informed us, through His messengers, that He leaves the reward in full or in part to the Day of Judgment.

Therefore, all those who understand His wisdom with regard to His creation realize that the life to come is essential for the fulfilment of God's promise. The ungrateful, however, are oblivious of divine wisdom. They impolitely say: *And those who were ungrateful said: The Hour will not approach us.* (34:3) Hence the emphatic retort: They have no knowledge of what is beyond their world, but they nevertheless are quick to assert something of which they have no knowledge: *Say: Yea! By my Lord, it will, certainly, approach you. He is One Who Knows of the unseen.* (34:3) What He states is the truth. Furthermore, this truth is simple, complete and based on sound and true knowledge.

Once more God's knowledge is portrayed against a similarly universal background testifying once more to the Originator of the Quran. Such thoughts simply do not occur to human minds: *Not an atom's weight escapes from Him in the heavens or in and on the earth, be it smaller than that or greater, but that it had been in a clear Book.* (34:3) Such images do not occur in ordinary prose or poetry. When people describe knowledge as complete, comprehensive and accurate, they do not paint such a captivating universal image.

This is a description by God of His own knowledge, using human language in a way humans do not use it. Thus the Muslims' own concept of God is set on a nobler level. The nearest meaning of the phrase, *but that it had been in a clear Book*, is that God's knowledge takes note of everything, including the tiniest of atoms and what is even smaller.

The inevitable arrival of the Last Hour and God's knowledge that does not exclude anything small or large have a definite purpose: *that He may give recompense to those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality. Those, for them there is forgiveness and a generous provision. But those who endeavored against Our signs as ones who strive to thwart, those, for them there is a punishment of painful wrath.* (34:4-34:5) Everything is based on God's wisdom who has created everything according to a set measure so as to administer the right reward or punishment for the believers or those who exert all efforts to turn people away from the truth. Those who give credence to their faith by good actions earn God's forgiveness

of any errors they make or sins they commit. They also have 'generous provisions' Therefore, it is fitting that the happiness they are assured to have in the life to come is described here as 'provisions', which in fact it is.

The others, who strive hard to turn people away from God and His message will receive some of the worst type of punishment which fits their wicked efforts. Thus is God's purpose fulfilled.

Within the overall context of God's knowledge and His purpose the next statement makes clear that those endowed with knowledge realize that what the Prophet Muhammad receives from God is the truth, providing sound guidance: *And consider those who were given the knowledge that what was caused to descend to you from your Lord. It is The Truth and it guides to a path of The Almighty, The Worthy of Praise.* (34:6)

The way leading to the Almighty is the system He has placed in the universe and chosen for humanity so that their lives may be in harmony with the universe they live in. It is the law that applies to absolutely everything that takes place in the universe: *And consider those who were given the knowledge that what was caused to descend to you from your Lord. It is The Truth and it guides to a path of The Almighty, The Worthy of Praise.* (34:6)

The chapter again mentions their reception to news of a Day of Judgment, expressing their total amazement at such a subject. They, in fact, suggest that to claim that resurrection takes place on a day when all humanity will be individually judged by God can only be attributed to a madman or someone who invents lies and attributes them to God. (34:7-34:8)

Their amazement at the thought of resurrection is such that they invite people to join them in wondering at the condition of the person claiming it, using an especially derisive style: *Those who were ungrateful said: Shall we point you to a man who will tell you when you were torn to pieces, ones who are totally torn to pieces? Then, you will be, truly, in a new creation.* (34:7) Do you want to see such a strange man uttering wild claims of a new creation after you have been long dead and your bodies have decomposed? Such derision then turns to defamation: According to them, such claims can only be made by a liar, by someone who fabricates ideas and claims that they are God's, or by a madman affected by the jinn to such an extent that he says what is incomprehensible.

What justifies their attitude? Is it simply because he says that they will be resurrected? Why is this so amazing when they have already gone through the process of being created? They do not even

reflect on this amazing event, which they know to have taken place, i.e. their creation in the first instance. Had they reflected on this, they would not have marvelled at a second creation. They have already gone astray. Hence, the chapter comments: *Devised he a lie against God or is there a madness in him? Nay! Those who believe not in the world to come there is a punishment and a going far astray.* (34:8)

These people, who disbelieve in the life to come, are jerked from their slumber and presented with a fearful scene which could happen to them, if God so wills. What they see in the heavens and earth, and what may befall them at any time, should God wish it, present clear signs for anyone who reflects and turns to God with submission: *Consider they not what is in advance of them and what is behind them of the heaven and the earth? If We will, We could cause the earth to swallow them, or cause to drop on them pieces of heaven. Truly, in this is a sign for every servant, one who turns in repentance.* (34:9)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Learning and studying techniques

Your path for most effective learning is through knowing...

Visual/spatial learning
Learning, for visual-spatial learners, takes place all at once...

Learning as a student-athlete or student-performer
Indicators of a "kinesthetic intelligence" or body smarts...

Learning as an adult
Does higher education seem like a foreign culture to you?

Active learning
Active learning is experiential, mindful, and engaging...

Action learning
Action learning is a learning and problem-solving strategy for organizations...

Mathematical language learning strategies
In learning the language of mathematics, we follow the advice that practice make perfect, and patience a helpful virtue...

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I followed the guidelines below:
- Do your homework!
- Read critically; form your own opinions
- Review your notes
- from the previous lecture and reading for the day
- Communicate immediately with professors about any study problems

QURANIC CHAPTER 34: SHEBA (AL-SABA)
SIGNS 34:10-34:21

Makkah: Book 28: David (34:10)
Makkah: Book 28: David (34:11)
Makkah: Book 28: Solomon and Sheba (34:12)
Makkah: Book 28: Solomon and Sheba (34:13)
Makkah: Book 28: Solomon and Sheba (34:14)
Makkah: Book 28: Solomon and Sheba (34:15)
Makkah: Book 28: Solomon and Sheba (34:16)
Makkah: Book 28: Solomon and Sheba (34:17)
Makkah: Book 28: Solomon and Sheba (34:18)
Makkah: Book 28: Solomon and Sheba (34:19)
Makkah: Book 28: Solomon and Sheba (34:20)
Makkah: Book 28: Solomon and Sheba (34:21)

LESSON 58(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE

Known values of Quranic thinking include self-development (*jihad al-akbar*) and social improvement (*ummah* as a middle community). Both of these require the recognition of gaps between ideals and practice as the gap causes a loss of truth and consistency. This strategy of recognizing the gaps between facts and ideals is connected with developing integrity and good faith.

QURANIC CHAPTER 34: SHEBA (AL-SABA)

SIGNS 34:22-34:30

Makkah: *Say: Call on those whom you claimed other than God.*
They possess not the weight of an atom
in the heavens nor on the earth,
nor have they in either any association,
nor among them is there any sustainer of Him. (34:22)
No intercession profits with Him,
but for him to whom He gave permission.
Until when their hearts were freed from terror, they said:
What is it that your Lord said. They said: The Truth.
And He is the Lofty, the Great. (34:23)
Say: Who provides for you from the heavens and the earth?
Say: God. And, truly, we or you are either on guidance
or clearly going astray. (34:24)
Say: You will not be asked of what we sinned,
nor will we be asked about what you do. (34:25)
Say: Our Lord will gather us. Again, He will explain The Truth
among us and He is The Opener, The Knowing. (34:26)
Say: Cause me to see those whom you caused to join with Him
as ascribed associates. No indeed!
Nay! He is God, The Almighty, The Wise. (34:27)
And We sent you not, but collectively for humanity
as a bearer of good tidings and a warner,
but most of humanity knows not. (34:28)
And they say: When is this promise if you had been
ones who are sincere? (34:29)
Say: Yours is the solemn declaration of a Day which you delay
not for an hour nor press forward. (34:30)

COMMENTARY°

This short passage tackles the issue of God's Oneness in contrast

to attributing partners to Him. Yet it takes us on a round of the universe, with both its apparent realm and that which is hidden from us, its present and past, heavens and earth, this life and the life to come. The passage also refers to our sustenance, actions and reward. It looks at how people are grouped together and then separated into two distinct parties. All this is delivered in a quick rhythm with strong accompanying beats. The word, say, is repeatedly used for added emphasis. After each such usage, a new proof is given which is both irrefutable and overpowering.

THE TRUTH WILL OUT

The sign: *Say: Call on those whom you claimed other than God.* (34:22) begins with a challenge that applies to the entire universe, without exception: *They possess not the weight of an atom in the heavens nor on the earth.* (34:22) They cannot even claim to own anything in the heavens or the earth. An owner of something has full authority over it: he can do or dispense with it as he likes. What, then, do those alleged deities own in this vast universe?

They do not own an atom's weight either as their own private property or as something in which they have a share: *Nor have they in either any association.* (34:22) Moreover, God does not seek their help in anything. He is in no need of help: *Nor among them is there any sustainer of Him.* (34:22)

The sign appears to refer to a particular type of alleged partner with God. These are the angels whom the Arabs claimed to be God's daughters, alleging that they could intercede with God on people's behalf. Therefore, in the next sign the chapter denies that they have any means of intercession while drawing a scene that fills hearts with fear: *No intercession profits with Him, but for him to whom He gave permission.* (34:23) Intercession, then, is dependent on God's permission. Needless to say, God will not permit intercession on behalf of people who do not believe in Him and deserve His grace. Those who associate partners with Him do not deserve that He grant permission to angels or anyone else to intercede on their behalf.

The chapter then describes the fearful scene when intercession is needed: *Until when their hearts were freed from terror, they said: What is it that your Lord said. They said: The Truth.* (34:23) The day is exceedingly hard: people stand awaiting developments, and those who can intercede and the ones who hope for intercession in their favor wait for a signal from the Almighty permitting such intercession. The wait continues, faces look down, sounds die out and hearts go quiet as all await a signal from the Lord, full of majesty and glory

The word of permission is then given and all prospective intercessors and the ones they are interceding for are overwhelmed with awe. They are unable to comprehend. Then, *when their hearts were freed from terror* and they recover their senses and faculties, they begin to ask one another: What has your Lord ordained? They wonder whether they have understood what God said. The answer is given in one word: The truth.' It may he that the angels of the highest order are the ones who give this perfect answer. Your Lord has stated the truth, complete and perfect; the truth that comes from Him who is truth absolute. For whatever God says is absolutely true. *And He is the Lofty, the Great.* (34:23) It is a most fitting description.

That was the first note of this splendid and awe-inspiring scene. The second note refers to the provisions granted to them. Although they are oblivious to the source that gives them their provisions, the fact that they have them proves His Oneness and that no one else has any control over what He decides to give or deny. *Say: God. And, truly, we or you are either on guidance or clearly going astray.* (34:24)

The next note puts everyone before their actions and responsibilities, but again using the most polite and fair approach: *Say: You will not be asked of what we sinned.* (34:25) This might have been in answer to the repeated accusations of the idolaters branding the Prophet and his Companions as guilty and in the wrong. They had in this respect berated them for renouncing their forefathers' religion. This happens all the time, when the followers of falsehood accuse the followers of truth of being in error. Hence, the Prophet is instructed to tell them in exemplary politeness that everyone is responsible for his or her own deeds: *Nor will we be asked about what you do.* (34:25) Everyone must reflect and determine whether their attic tide will lead them to success or bring about their ruin. This is the first step towards recognizing the truth before attaining conviction.

The fourth note is given in the sign that says: *Say: Our Lord will gather us. Again, He will explain The Truth among us and He is The Opener, The Knowing.* (34:26) At first, God gathers both the followers of truth and those who follow falsehood together, so that both truth and falsehood meet face to face. Then, the advocates of truth will call on others to join them. At this stage, issues become confused, and a battle ensues between truth and falsehood. Doubts may blur evidence, and falsehood may appear to gain the upper hand, but all this will be for a limited duration. Then, God will judge between the two parties in fairness and state the truth clearly, without any ambiguity or confusion.

The final note in this passage sounds similar to the first one, throwing out a challenge to those who associated partners with him: *Say: Cause me to see those whom you caused to join with Him as ascribed associates.* (34:27) The very request is sarcastic: demanding that they reveal the subject of their claims: who are they; what is their status, position and role; how did they merit such a position? All these questions betray an element of derision. This is followed by strong censure: *No indeed! Nay! He is God, The Almighty, The Wise.* (34:27) The One who has such attributes has no partners of any sort.

These signs (34:28-30) clarify what was stated in the previous passage about each individual's accountability to God, and that the role of the advocates of truth does not go beyond delivering God's message and presenting it clearly before the rest of humanity. The current passage starts with explaining the mission assigned to the Prophet. It is clear that they are unaware of its nature. Therefore, they try to hasten what he promises or threatens them with. It makes clear that this comes at the time God has determined for it, which is unknown to anyone other than Him: *And We sent you not, but collectively for humanity as a bearer of good tidings and a warner.* (34:28) Such is the remit of the message addressed to all humanity: to bring good news and to give warning. When this is done, the messenger's role has ended. As for the fulfilment of promise and warning, this is all left to God to determine: *But most of humanity knows not.* (34:28)

The very question: *And they say: When is this promise if you had been ones who are sincere?* (34:29) implies that they do not understand the Messenger's role or the limits of the message. The Quran wants the question of God's Oneness to be absolutely clear: Muhammad is His Messenger with a clearly defined remit. He fulfils his task but does not go beyond this. All authority belongs to God: it is He who has given him the message to deliver, clearly defining his role. It is not part of his role to decide, or even to know, when the promise and the warning are to be fulfilled. This all belongs to God. The Prophet knows his limits. Therefore, he does not even question anything God has not chosen to inform him of, or has not assigned to him. Here, God instructs him to give them this particular reply: *Say: Yours is the solemn declaration of a Day which you delay not for an hour nor press forward.* (34:30)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts**

(vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

Stimulate the students to ask questions about the Quranic signs.
Make the students comfortable when questioned so that they learn to value and master the questioning process.
Introduce questions in such a way that students come to see it as a way t o get to the heart of matters and understand things from a different point of view.
Do not negate or embarrass the students.
Make sure the atmosphere is one of mutual support and cooperation.
Question the students about their reasoning behind their ideas.

Why? If that is so, what follows? Are you assuming that...?
How do you know that? Is the point that you are making that... or, ...? For example? Is this an example of what you mean..., or this?
Can I summarize your point as ...? What is your reason for saying that?
What do you mean when using this word? Is it possible that...?
Are there other ways of looking at it?
How else could we view this matter?

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

What ideas or principles does the Quranic message clarify?
What Idea am I using in my thinking?
Is this idea causing problems for me or for others?
What is the main hypothesis you are using in your reasoning?
Are you using this term in keeping with established usage?
What main distinctions should we draw in reasoning through this?
What idea is the sacred text using in its thinking?
Is there a problem with it?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I asked myself how I would follow up with the question I asked. Doing that, I was able to answer what that told me about my question.

LESSON 58(3). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING

An essential requirement of critical thinking is the ability to think about thinking, to engage in what is sometimes called "metacognition." One possible definition of critical thinking is the art of thinking about your thinking while you're thinking in order to make your thinking better: more clear, more accurate, more fair. It is precisely at the level of "thinking about thinking" that most critical thinking stands in contrast to uncritical thinking. Critical thinkers can analyze thought—take it apart and put it together again. For the uncritical, thoughts are "just there". "I think what I think, don't ask me why." The analytical vocabulary in the English language (such terms as assume, infer, conclude, criteria, point of view: relevance: issue, elaborate, ambiguous, objection, support, bias, justify, perspective, contradiction, consistent, credibility, evidence, interpret, distinguish) enables us to think more precisely about our thinking. We are in a better position to assess reasoning (our own, as well as that of others) when we can use analytic vocabulary with accuracy and ease.

QURANIC EXAMPLES OF THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING

The Quran encourages thinking about thinking (metacognition). God commands us to reflect about something carefully so one may not jump to conclusions without critical insight. *Say: Journey through the earth; then, look on how He began the creation. Again, God will cause the last growth to grow. Truly, God is Powerful over everything.* (29:20)

God directs the attention of people to think by saying: Say to them. An example of the hundreds of "*Say*" signs: *Say: I admonish you in but one thing: That you stand up for God by twos and one by one. Again, reflect. There is not in your companion any madness. He is only a warner to you of a severe punishment in advance of you.* (34:46)

The Quran gives narratives of the past so that the people may think and reflect over them.

God tells us that the objective of so many stories which have been mentioned in various chapters is to motivate humanity to think and reflect in order to get lessons and to seek wisdom. *If We willed, We would have exalted him with them, but he inclined towards the earth, and followed his own desires. And his parable is like the parable of a dog. If you will attack it, it pants. Or if you will leave it, it pants. That is the parable of the folk, those who denied Our signs. Then, relate these narratives so that perhaps they will reflect.* (7:176)

In the field of *tawhid* and to direct human being's attention to the creator: *Truly, in the creation of the heavens and of the earth and the alteration of nighttime and daytime there are signs for those imbued with intuition, those who remember God while upright and sitting and on their sides and they re-*

flect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: Our Lord! You had not created this in vain. Glory be to You! Then, protect us from the punishment of the fire. (3:191-3:192)

To reflect upon the signs in the Quran: It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect. (38:29)

WHAT ARE THE OBSTACLES TO BEING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKERS?

Arrogance (*takabbur*): *The Messiah will never disdain that he be a servant of God nor the angels, the ones who are brought near to Him. Whoever disdains His worship and grows arrogant, He will assemble them altogether to Himself.* (2:34)

Traditionalism and Blind Following (*taashub* and *taqlid*): *When it was said to them: Follow what God caused to descend. They said: Nay! We will follow whatever we discovered our fathers were following on it—even though their fathers had been not at all reasonable—nor are they truly guided.* (2:170)

Giving the Lie to the Messages (*takzib*): *Devised he a lie against God or is there a madness in him? Nay! Those who believe not in the world to come there is a punishment and a going far astray.* (34:8)

Hypocrisy (*nifaq*): *They, those who say: Spend not on such ones who are with the Messenger of God until they break away. To God belongs the treasures of the heavens and the earth but the ones who are hypocrites understand not.* (63:7)

Ignorance and Not Being Aware of the Truth (*jahlu*): *Even if We sent down the angels to them and the dead spoke to them and we assembled everything against them, face to face, yet they would not believe unless God wills, except many of them are ignorant.* (6:111)

Lust and Desires (*hawa*): *Surely, He explained distinctly to you what He forbade to you unless you were driven by necessity to it. Truly, many cause others to go astray by their desires without knowledge. Truly, your Lord, He is greater in knowledge of the ones who exceed the limits.* (6:119)

Reliance on Conjecture, Opinion: *If you have obeyed most of who are on the earth, they will cause you to go astray from the way of God. They follow nothing but opinion and they only guess.* (6:116)

Turning Away from the Truth (*fasiqun*, ones who disobey): *O Prophet! Struggle with the ones who are ungrateful and the ones who are hypocrites and be you harsh against them. Their place of shelter will be hell. Miserable will be the Homecoming! They swear by God that they said not against the Prophet but, certainly, they said the word of ingratitude and they were ungrateful after their submission to God. They were about to do something that they never attain. They sought revenge but that God would enrich them and His Messenger with His grace. If they repent, it would be better for them. If*

they turn away, God will punish them with a painful punishment in the present and in the world to come. There is not for them on earth either a protector or a helper. (9:73-9:74)

QURANIC CHAPTER 34: SHEBA (AL-SABA)
SIGNS 34:31-34:36

Makkah: *And those who were ungrateful said:*
We will never believe in this, the Quran,
nor in what was in advance of it,
but if you consider when the ones who are unjust
who are stationed before their Lord,
returning the saying, some of them to some others.
Say to those who were taken advantage of
due to their weakness to those who grew arrogant:
If it were not for you,
we would have been ones who believe. (34:31)
Those who grew arrogant would say
to those who were taken advantage due to their weakness:
Barred we you from guidance after it drew near you?
Nay! You had been ones who sin. (34:32)
And would say those who were taken advantage
due to their weakness
to those who grew arrogant:
Nay! It was your planning by nighttime and daytime
when you commanded us to be ungrateful to God
and to assign rivals to Him.
And they will keep their self-reproach secret
when they will see the punishment
and We assigned yokes around the necks
of those who were ungrateful.
Are they given recompense
but for what they had been doing? (34:33)
We sent not any warner to a town,
but that the ones who are given ease said:
Truly, in what you were sent,
we are ones who disbelieve it. (34:34)
And they said: We are more than you in wealth
and in children and we are not ones who are punished! (34:35)
Say: Truly, my Lord extends the provision for whomever He wills
and confines it for whom He wills,
but most of humanity knows not. (34:36)

COMMENTARY°

The next sign speaks about a determined attitude to reject all divine guidance: The ungrateful say: *We will never believe in this, the Quran, nor in what was in advance of it.* (34:31) They make it clear that they will never believe, neither in the Quran nor in any divine book that preceded the Quran, which in fact confirms its truth. They are not prepared to believe in any of this at any time in the future either. They are determined to disbelieve, deliberately refusing even to consider anything that points to faith. It is all, then, a well considered stance. Therefore, the chapter puts before their eyes what happens to them on the Day of Judgment as a result of their stubborn rejection.

They blame their leaders, accusing them of being responsible for this humiliation and what will come next of great suffering. They state this now but were totally unable to confront them in this way during their life on earth, prevented as they were by their weakness and submission. They had sold out the freedom and dignity God had granted them, as well as the reasoning He had blessed them with. Now that all false values have been discarded, and they are put face to face with a long-lasting suffering, they can express themselves without fear: (34:31)

Those who used to think much of their power base are fed up with those whom they treated with humiliation. Both face the same punishment, but the weaker elements want them to bear responsibility for leading them astray, which is what has brought them to this suffering. Therefore, their reply is haughty, disowning any responsibility. They also tell them rudely what they think of them: (34:32)

It is not only that they deny responsibility for others, but they acknowledge that the message they received was one of guidance. In their first life, they paid little heed to the weak or their views. In fact, they treated them as if they did not exist, accepting neither argument nor opposition from them. Now that they are facing the punishment of the hereafter, they reproachfully ask them: *Barred we you from guidance after it drew near you?* (34:32) With this denial comes an accusation: *Nay! You had been ones who sin.* (34:32) You refused the guidance that was given you because you yourselves were guilty.

Had this exchange taken place in this life, the weak would have sat quietly, unable to utter a word. But on the Day of Judgment, when false airs are seen for what they are, and when the facts that were hidden are brought into the open, the weak do not accept this accusation. Instead, they speak out telling the others that it was they who consistently schemed to turn them away from God's guidance, it was

they who established false beliefs, created confusion around the truth, and who used power and influence to keep people astray: (34:33)

Both groups will then realize that such a depressing dialogue benefits neither. It will not spare either the punishment they deserve. Each party is guilty of their own sins: the ones who claimed power have to account for their own sins, as well as for leading others astray; and similarly the weak are responsible for their own sins and for following tyrants. They cannot he exempt on account of the fact that they were weak. God favored them with reason and freedom, but they chose not to use their reason and sold their freedom, accepting humiliation and servility. Thus, they all deserve to be punished. When they see the suffering they have to endure, they are in deep sorrow, regretting all that they have done: *And they will keep their self-reproach secret when they will see the punishment.* (34:33) This is a description of a state of total regret that leaves the person unable to utter a word. Hearts are buried and lips are sealed.

They are then taken to where their punishment, hard and painful, is meted out: *and We assigned yokes around the necks of those who were ungrateful.* (34:33) As they are being so driven, the chapter addresses the onlookers, saying: *Are they given recompense but for what they had been doing?* (34:33)

AN EVER REPEATED STORY

The wealthy Qurayshi people behaved in exactly the same way as others of affluence when they received a divine message: *We sent not any warner to a town, but that the ones who are given ease said: Truly, in what you were sent, we are ones who disbelieve it.* (34:34) Thus, it is the same story repeated again and again throughout the generations. Luxurious life hardens hearts, blunts sensitivity, and corrupts nature so that it no longer sees the pointers divine guidance provides. It thus lures people into arrogance, darkness and falsehood.

People who live in luxury are often deceived by false values and transient affluence. They are deluded by the power and wealth they enjoy, thinking that it will spare them God's punishment or that it is evidence of God's being pleased with them, or that in their position they are above accountability for their deeds: *And they said: We are more than you in wealth and in children and we are not ones who are punished!* (34:35)

The Quran puts in front of them the standard of values God wants. It explains to them that whether God grants provisions in plenty or makes them scanty is no indication of God's being pleased or displeased with a person. It has nothing to do with the correct stan-

dard of values; it neither prevents punishment nor induces it. It is totally separate from the question of accountability, reckoning, requital and God's pleasure. It is subject to a totally different divine rule: *Say: Truly, my Lord extends the provision for whomever He wills and confines it for whom He wills, but most of humanity knows not.* (34:36)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QURANIC CHALLENGES

Quranic references to concentrated and goal-oriented thinking provoked by the challenge to find something new or to solve a difficult problem (*tadabbur*) and the exercise of intellect occur in conjunction with basically five major themes:

Belief in the Oneness of God (*tawhid*)
Reflection on the Quran
The Human Being and the Universe
Historical Precedent
Thinking Itself

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I know that I cannot interpret information without ideas or concepts, or some way to give meaning.

I am able to find the key idea, the central concept of the signs.

I know the subject of the concept and its vocabulary.

I know that I think within a vocabulary.

I use these vocabulary terms because they are powerful tools for thinking.

LESSON 58(4). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PROPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED

What is an assumption? An assumptions is a conjecture, a guess, an opinion, a premise, a hypothesis of a thing that is accepted as true or as certain to happen, without proof. All human thought and action or experiences are based on assumptions. The thought process needs them in order to be able to move forward. The key is for students to be aware of them.

In understanding your own assumptions as you try to exercise Quranic thinking, you begin to realize that you can't figure out everything simultaneously. You have to make assumptions to figure something out. It is not possible to have many unanswered questions at the same time. The mind must make assumptions as it works to problem solve. It must take something for granted. You know that you can always question assumptions as you move forward in your thought process. At the same time, you should think about the assumptions that you are making. You should try to make them with some awareness by asking yourseelf: Do they make sense? You are in a better position to evaluate any reasoning or behavior when all of the elements of that reasoning or behavior are made explicit. You base both your reasoning and your behavior on beliefs you take for granted. You are often unaware of these assumptions. It is only by recognizing them that you can evaluate them.

Quranic thinkers have a passion for truth and for accepting the strongest reasoning. Thus, they have the intellectual courage to seek out and reject false assumptions of others. They realize that everyone makes some questionable assumptions. They are willing to question, and have others question, even their own most cherished assumptions. They consider alternative assumptions. They base their acceptance or rejection of assumptions on their rational scrutiny of them. They hold questionable assumptions with an appropriate degree of tentativeness. Independent thinkers evaluate assumptions for themselves, and do not simply accept the assumptions of others, even those assumptions made by everyone they know.

QURANIC CHAPTER 34: SHEBA (AL-SABA)
SIGNS 34:37-34:45

Makkah: *And it is not your wealth nor your children*
that will bring you near to Us,
but whoever believed and did as one in accord with morality.
As for those, for them, the recompense is doubled
for what they did and they will live in the highest chambers
as one who is safe. (34:37)
And those who endeavor against Our signs,
as ones who strive to thwart them,
those are ones who are charged with the punishment. (34:38)

Say: Truly, my Lord extends the provision
for whomever He wills of His servants
and confines for him what He wills.
And whatever you spent of anything, He will replace it.
And He is Best of the ones who provide. (34:39)
And on a Day He will assemble them altogether.
Again, He will say to the angels:
Was it these who had been worshiping you? (34:40)
They would say: Glory be to ***You****!*
You *are our Protector and not they. Nay!*
They had been worshiping the jinn.
Most of them were ones who believe in them. (34:41)
Then, today none of you will possess the power
over some others to profit nor hurt
and We will say to those who did wrong:
Experience the punishment of the fire
which you had been denying. (34:42)
When are recounted to them Our signs, clear portents,
they said: This is not but a man who wants to bar you
from what your fathers had been worshipping.
And they said: This is not but a forged calumny.
And those who were ungrateful
for The Truth said when it drew near them:
Truly, this is but clear sorcery. (34:43)
And We gave them not any Books that they study them
nor sent We to them any warner before thee. (34:44)
Those that were before them denied
and they reached not one-tenth of what We gave them.
Yet they denied My Messengers.
So how had My disapproval of them been! (34:45)

COMMENTARY°

The rule concerning people's provisions and whether they are given in abundance or small measure is restated, making it clear that it is subject to God's wisdom. It tells us that whatever of our provision is spent for God's sake is the portion that remains and grows. We need to keep this fact clear in our minds: (34:39)

These are the angels they used to worship, or hope would intercede for them with God: they are brought face to face with them, but the angels glorify God, stating that He is exalted above all that these people allege. They disassociate themselves from such false worship, as though it had not taken place. They are indeed in Satan's service,

either worshipping him and appealing to him for help, or obeying him by associating partners with God. In fact, when they worshipped angels, they were actually worshipping Satan. Indeed worship of the jinn was practised by some Arabs. Some of them actually addressed their worship to the jinn, while others sought their help. Hence, the chapter says: (34:41)

As this scene concludes, the mode of expression changes from narrative to address. The blame is squarely put on them, and they are severely reproached: *Then, today none of you will possess the power over some others to profit nor hurt and We will say to those who did wrong:* (34:42) Neither can the angels benefit people, nor can those the ungrateful benefit one another. The fire the wrongdoers used to deny is now in front of them. It is an undoubted reality: *Experience the punishment of the fire which you had been denying.* (34:42) Like all previous passages, this one concludes with further emphasis on the question of resurrection, accountability, reckoning and reward.

They met the clear truth the Prophet recited to them with a confused legacy of past traditions that had neither a clear basis nor solid foundation. They realized that the simple, clear and consistent truth that was the Quran represented a serious threat to their confused medley of inherited beliefs and traditions. Hence they claimed: (34:43) They realized, however, that this was not enough. That it contradicted their forefathers' beliefs was not enough to convince everyone. Hence, they also questioned the honesty of the Messenger who delivered God's message: *And they said: This is not but a forged calumny. And those who were ungrateful for The Truth said when it drew near them: Truly, this is but clear sorcery.* (34:43) Needless to say, what is 'false' must be fabricated, but they wanted to give it stronger emphasis by saying *This is not but a forged calumny.* (34:43) In other words, they sought to undermine it, raising doubts about its divine source.

Then they moved on to describe the Quran itself: *And those who were ungrateful for The Truth said when it drew near them: Truly, this is but clear sorcery.* (34:43) They realized that the Quran is powerful and shakes people's hearts.

Therefore, it was not enough to say that it was fabricated. They had to explain its power and so alleged that it was '*clear sorcery.*' The Quran exposes them as it states that they were not given books in the past so as to evaluate new ones and judge revelations. How can they, then, say that what they now received was neither revelation nor a divine book? How can they say that it was not from God, when they did not have any messengers in the past? Their claims are devoid

of substance: (34:44)

The section then touches their hearts by reminding them of the destruction of earlier communities. Those Arabs had not been given one tenth of what those earlier people had of knowledge, wealth and power. When they denied God's messengers, punishment overwhelmed them: (34:45) This condemnation destroyed them all. The Quraysh knew of some of these old communities who suffered God's punishment. Therefore, this brief reminder is sufficient. It comes in the form of a sarcastic question: 'how terrible was My condemnation.' It is a question put to those who knew the extent of that condemnation.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

HOW ARE ASSUMPTIONS USED IN THE QURAN?

When students study Quranic concepts, there is something that they find in the signs that refer to assumptions people make. For example: *Assumes he that none has power over him? He says: I have caused abundant wealth to perish. Assumes he that none sees him? Make we not two eyes for him and a tongue and two lips and guided him to the two open highways? Yet he rushed not onto the steep ascent. What will cause you to recognize what the steep ascent is? It is the liberating of a bondsperson or feeding on a day possessing famine an orphan, possessor of kinship, or a needy, possessor of misery. Again, it had been among those who believed and counseled one another to having patience and counseled one another to clemency.* (90:5-90:17)

Much of what is wrong with human thought can be found in the uncritical or unexamined assumptions that underlie it. For example, students often experience the world in such a way as to assume that they are observing things just as they are, as though they were seeing the world without the filter of a point of view. People they disagree with, of course, they recognize as having a point of view. *Say: Shall We tell you who will be ones who are losers by their actions? It is those whose endeavoring went astray in this present life while they assume that they are doing good by their handiwork.* (18:103-18:104)

One of the key dispositions of critical thinking is the on-going sense that

as humans students always think within a perspective, that they virtually never experience things totally and absolutely. There is a connection therefore between thinking so as to be aware of their assumptions and being intellectually humble. *Assumed humanity that they will be left because they say: We believed and they will not be tried?* (29:2)

All reasoning must begin somewhere, must take some things for granted. Any 'defect' in the assumptions or presuppositions with which the reasoning begins is a possible source of problems. Assessing skills of reasoning involves assessing the ability to recognize and articulate their assumptions, again according to the relevant standards. *Assumed those who sought to do evil deeds that We will make them equal with those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality? Are their living and dying equal? How evil is the judgment they give!* (45:21)

A Quranic thinker's assumptions may be stated clearly or unclearly; the assumptions may be justifiable or unjustifiable, crucial or extraneous, consistent or contradictory. The feedback students receive from teachers on their ability to meet the relevant standards will be a large factor in the improvement of the Quranic student reasoning. *Or assumed you that you would enter the Garden while God knows not those who struggled among you and knows the ones who remain steadfast?* (3:142)

Assumptions usually operate at the subconscious or unconscious level of thought. Assumptions should be justified by sound evidence. *Assumes the human being that We will never gather his bones? Yea! We are ones who have power to shape his fingers again. Nay! The human being wants to act immorally in front of him. He asks: When is this Day of Resurrection? But when their sight will be astonished and the moon will cause the earth to be swallowed and the sun and the moon will be gathered, the human being will say on that Day: Where is a place to run away to?* (75:3-75:10)]

Assume they that We hear not their secret thoughts and their conspiring secretly? Yea! Our messengers are near them writing down. (43:80)

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I frequently evaluated my listening.
I actively listening for main points.
I was able to summarize what my instructor said in my own words.
I was able to elaborate what is meant by key terms.

Lesson 58(5). Critical Thinking Strategy Generating Implications, Consequences

What are implications?

Implications follow from our thoughts.

What are consequences?

Consequences follow from our actions.

Reasoning Well

The ability to reason well is measured in part by an ability to understand and enunciate the implications and, then, the consequences of the reasoning. For example: I think this or that. What does this thought imply? What would be the consequences if I were to act upon that thought?

Implications in Reasoning

When you spell out the implications of your reasoning:

Have you succeeded in identifying significant and realistic implications?

Have you confined yourselves to unimportant and unrealistic ones?

Have you enunciated the implications of your views clearly and precisely enough to permit your thinking to be evaluated by the validity of those implications?

Can you trace the implications and consequences that come from your reasoning?

Quranic Chapter 34: Sheba (al-Saba)
Signs 34:46-34:54

Makkah: *Say: I admonish you in but one thing:*
That you stand up for God by twos and one by one.
Again, reflect.
There is not in your companion any madness.
He is only a warner to you
of a severe punishment in advance of you. (34:46)
Say: Whatever compensation I asked of you,
that is for you.
My compensation is only from God.
And He is a Witness over everything. (34:47)
Say: Truly, my Lord hurls The Truth.
He is The Knower of the unseen. (34:48)
Say: The Truth drew near and falsehood
neither causes to begin nor causes to return. (34:49)
Say: If I went astray, truly, I will only go astray

with loss for myself.
And if I was truly guided,
it is because of what my Lord reveals to me.
Truly, He is Hearing, Ever Near. (34:50)
And if you would see when they would be terrified,
when there is no escape
and they would be taken from a near place, (34:51)
they would say: We believed in it! But how could they reach it
from a place so far away? (34:52)
And, surely, they were ungrateful for it before.
And they hurl at the unseen from a far place. (34:53)
And a barrier was set up between them
and between that for which they lust,
just as was accomplished with partisans before.
Truly, they had been uncertain, in grave doubt. (34:54)

COMMENTARY°

A SEARCH FOR THE TRUTH

At this point the Prophet is instructed to call on them in all sincerity to search for the truth, to distinguish between what is false and what is true, and to assess the situation they are in, free of distortion and fabrication: *Say: I admonish you in but one thing: That you stand up for God by twos and one by one. Again, reflect. There is not in your companion any madness.* (34:46)

This is an invitation to stand before God, in all sincerity, removing from one's mind all personal prejudices, interests, motivations, desires, environmental and social influences. It is an invitation to look at the facts, plain and simple. This invitation seeks to put before their eyes the plain argument of human nature, away from everything that blurs or obscures what is clear and simple. At the same time, it is a simple means to search for truth, discarding all outside influences and being mindful only of God.

He is only a warner to you of a severe punishment in advance of you. (34:46) This statement shows the suffering to be close at hand, and the warning precedes it by only by one step, hoping to save anyone who listens. It is like an alarm warning of a fire that threatens lives. It urges immediate action to escape inevitable suffering.

At first the chapter called on them to think carefully about the man delivering the message and the fact that he is of sound mind, without the faintest trace of madness. Now they are asked to think about the reasons that motivate him to warn them against the painful suffering that may befall them: what is his interest in all this? How

can he benefit by it? The Quran orders the Prophet to put this to them in a way that fits with their logic and touches their consciences: *Say: Whatever compensation I asked of you, that is for you. My compensation is only from God.* (34:47) It is He who has charged me with this message and He gives me my reward for it. It is to Him alone that I look for reward. If a person expects to be rewarded by God, all that others can offer is trifling. *And He is a Witness over everything.* (34:47) He sees and knows everything. Nothing is hidden from Him. He is my witness in whatever I intend, say or do.

The third note is stronger and faster: *Say: Truly, my Lord hurls The Truth. He is The Knower of the unseen.* (34:48) What I have given you is the truth, which is powerful in its own right. However, it is God who hurls it forth: who can stand up to His truth? It is like a missile whose trajectory penetrates what otherwise would not be possible to penetrate. The one who hurls it is God, who 'has full knowledge of all that is beyond the reach of people's perception.' When He hurls it, He is fully aware of what takes place. No goal is hidden from Him and no shield or fortification can stop what He hurls.

The fourth note is just as fast and strong: *Say: The Truth drew near and falsehood neither causes to begin nor causes to return.* (34:49) This truth has now come, in one of its forms, in the message embodied in the Quran and its straight path. The Prophet is ordered here to declare the coming of the truth, strong, overpowering, rising high and imposing its authority: *Say: The Truth drew near and falsehood neither causes to begin nor causes to return.* (34:49) Falsehood is done for: it has no life of its own and nowhere to function. It is destined for a miserable end. As we listen, we feel as if the end has already been sealed.

This is indeed the case. Ever since the Quran was revealed, the truth has been established on solid foundations. Compared with its clarity and power, falsehood is nothing more than a futile argument which is known to be so. Falsehood may appear to triumph in certain situations, but this is not a victory over the truth, but rather over the people who claim loyalty to it; it's a triumph of people, not principles. Such a victory is temporary, not permanent. The truth remains the same: clear and simple.

The final note says: *Say: If I went astray, truly, I will only go astray with loss for myself.* (34:50) You will lose nothing if I go astray, because I will be the one accountable for it. If I am following guidance, it is because God has guided me aright when He gave me His revelation. I can produce nothing of that. I only remain subject:

And if I was truly guided, it is because of what my Lord reveals to me. (34:50) This is how those who responded to the Prophet's call and believed in his message felt God's presence. They felt His interaction with them. They felt Him near to them, listening to what they said, taking direct care of their affairs. Their complaints and appeals went directly to Him, and He did not overlook them or give them to someone else to deal with. This made them aware that they lived under God's supervision, close to Him and receiving His care and kindness. This they felt in reality, not as an abstract notion or a representation of an idea. It was real fact: *Truly, He is Hearing, Ever Near.* (34:50)

If you could but see when they are seized by terror, with nowhere to escape; for they will have been seized from a place nearby. (34:51-34:54) How can they regain it in their new position when the place to believe is now so far away? It was available to them in their life in this world, but they let the chance go unheeded.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Ask:

On what evidence is my conclusion based?
Where did I get the evidence?
How could I find out what other evidence exists?
What evidence supports opposing views?
Is the evidence sufficient or do I need more?
Is there reason to question this evidence?
What makes it questionable? Acceptable?
Does another view account for this evidence?

How would your rate yourself? Ask yourself:

Do I talk about what I have not yet done?
Why do I do so?
What evidence do I have?

LESSON 59(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY GENERATING OR ASSESSING SOLUTIONS

Quranic critical thinkers ask questions to reach solutions. They try to find the best solution they can by evaluating solutions through comparing them to each other. Thus, it is not an evaluation independent of the various issues, but by comparing the various possibilities. They are not hasty. They examine a problem or issue at length. Quranic thinkers are also known as creative thinkers, thinkers who generate various possible solutions in order to find the best one. It may be that an issue or problem persists because the best possible answer has not as yet been found. As a result, Quranic creative thinkers use all the information that the Quranic signs give them relevant to that particular issue or problem. Solutions are implied in many of the implications that the Quranic signs give. Once students become familiar with the implications present in various Quranic signs, they develop a certain flexibility and imagination in trying to solve problems even going so far as trying new types of solutions. As Quranic creative thinkers they are fair-minded. They take the interests of others into account when generating solutions. They are realistic in their approach not seeking a solution that they want, but finding the best solution possible.

QURANIC CHAPTER 39: THE TROOPS (AL-ZUMAR) SIGNS 39:1-39:9

Makkah: *The sending down successively of this Book*
is from God, The Almighty, The Wise. (39:1)
Truly, We caused to descend to you the Book
with The Truth so worship God
as one who is sincere and devoted in the way of life to Him. (39:2)
The way of life is exclusively for God.
And those who took to themselves protectors other than Him say:
We worship them not, but that they bring us nearness to God.
Truly, God gives judgment between them
about what they are at variance in it. Truly, God guides not him,
one who lies and is an ingrate. (39:3)
If God wanted to take to Himself a son,
He would have favored from what He creates of what He wills.
Glory be to Him. He is God, The One,
The Omniscient. (39:4)
He created the heavens and the earth with The Truth.
He wraps the nighttime around the daytime
and wraps the daytime around the nighttime.
And He caused to be subservient the sun and the moon,
each run for a term, that which is determined.

Is He not The Almighty, The Forgiver? (39:5)
He creates you from one soul.
Again, He made its mate from it
and He caused to descend for you eight pairs of flocks.
He creates you in the wombs of your mothers,
creation after creation,
in threefold shadows.
Such is God your Lord. His is the dominion.
There is no god but He. Why, then, turn you away? (39:6)
If you are ungrateful, truly, God is Independent of you.
And He is not well-pleased with ingratitude from His servants.
And if you give thanks, He will be well-pleased with you.
No burdened soul will bear the heavy load of another.
Again, to your Lord is the return,
so He will tell you what you had been doing.
Truly, He is Knowing of what is in the breasts. (39:7)
And when some distress afflicted the human being,
he calls to his Lord as one who turns in repentance to Him.
Again, when He granted him divine blessing from Himself,
he forgets that for which he had been calling to Him before
and he laid on rivals to God to cause others
to go astray from His way.
Say: Take joy in your ingratitude for awhile.
Truly, you are of the Companions of the Fire. (39:8)
Is he one who is morally obligated during the night watch,
one who prostrates himself or one who is standing up in prayer
being fearful of the world to come
and hoping for the mercy of his Lord?
Say: Are those who know on the same level
as those who know not?
Only those imbued with intuition recollect. (39:9)

COMMENTARY°

The section begins with a clear, emphatic statement: *The sending down successively of this Book is from God, The Almighty, The Wise.* (39:1) As He is Almighty, He is able to bestow it from on high, and as He is wise, He knows the purpose of bestowing it, ensuring that it is all done in accordance with wise and elaborate planning.

The section, however, does not dwell on this fact. It is only a prelude to its main theme, which this book has been revealed to establish, namely, God's Oneness, addressing all worship to Him alone, ensuring sincerity in faith, eliminating all traces of any alleged part-

nership with God and establishing direct contact with Him without any intermediary or need for intercession.

The essence of the truth with which the book has been revealed is the absolute Oneness of God, which forms the foundation of all existence. *Truly, We caused to descend to you the Book with The Truth so worship God as one who is sincere and devoted in the way of life to Him.* (39:2)

The address here is to the Prophet, the recipient of the book as it is bestowed from on high. It embodies the constitution which he advocates, calling on all humanity to adopt it: to worship God alone, sincere in our devotion, and to conduct human life, in all spheres, on this basis. These are not mere statements. It is a complete system, starting with a firm belief that is translated into an all-embracing way of life for both the individual and the community.

In Arabic this statement has added emphasis provided by certain characteristics of the sentence structure, which is peculiar to Arabic and difficult to capture in translation. *The way of life is exclusively for God.* (39:3) It gives the statement the sense of a declaration producing a loud but clear echo. Thus sound, structure and meaning combine to strongly emphasize this basic truth upon which all life, throughout the universe, is based.

Then a refutation of the complex superstition the idolaters presented in opposition to belief in God's Oneness follows: *And those who took to themselves protectors other than Him say: We worship them not, but that they bring us nearness to God. Truly, God gives judgment between them about what they are at variance in it. Truly, God guides not him, one who lies and is an ingrate.* (39:3)

The section then shows their belief to be erroneous: *If God wanted to take to Himself a son* ... (39:4) This is a supposition made for the sake of argument and to correct concepts. Had God wished for a son, He could have chosen any of His creatures. His will is free, unrestricted. However, He, in His limitless glory, has made Himself free of any such need. Hence, no one can attribute to Him a son. Such is His will and determination: *He would have favored from what He creates of what He wills. Glory be to Him. He is God, The One, The Omniscient.* (39:4)

Why would He need a son when He is the Creator and Originator of all who controls everything. Indeed everything in the universe belongs it to Him and He can do with it all whatever He wants: *He created the heavens and the earth with The Truth. He wraps the nighttime around the daytime and wraps the daytime around the nighttime. And He caused to be subservient the sun and the moon,*

each run for a term, that which is determined. Is He not The Almighty, The Forgiver? (39:5) This reference to the great universe and the phenomena of night and day, and the subjecting of the sun and moon to God's law, puts the truth of the One God clearer before human nature. The One who creates all this from nothing does not need a son or a partner.

Likewise, He bestowed His book from on high to state the truth. *Is He not The Almighty, The Forgiver?* (39:5) It is the same truth in the universe and in this book, the Quran. Both originate from the same source, and both are evidence of the Oneness of their Maker, the Almighty, the Wise.

Let the human being look at his own self. *Again, He made its mate from it and He caused to descend for you eight pairs of flocks.* (39:6) He has not created himself, nor does he know who created the human entity except for what God has told him. Yet we all originate from one soul, with one nature and the same characteristics that distinguish us from the rest of creation. Moreover, every human individual shares in these characteristics, because the human soul is one in the countless millions of humans across all generations and all communities. Moreover, its mate or spouse is also made from the same essence. Thus, despite all differences of detail between men and women, they share all these characteristics. This again confirms the unity of the original design for humanity, male and female, and the unity of the Will that created this single soul with its two manifestations.

The sign continues its discussion of man's creation, referring to various growth stages of the embryo: These stages of creation begin with the gamete, then a clinging cell mass, then an embryo, then the bones, and then to a creation that indicates its human status: *He creates you in the wombs of your mothers, creation after creation, in threefold shadows.* (39:6) There is the darkness of the placenta in which the embryo grows, the darkness of the uterus, and the darkness inside the mother's body. It is God's hand that takes the single cell through these stages of creation, one after another, looking after it and giving it the ability to grow and develop until it is formed in a complete human being as God has determined.

Anyone who looks carefully at this journey, which covers a huge gulf traversed in a short period of time, and who reflects on these stages of development, and on how this simple cell is guided along its remarkable journey in these depths of darkness, beyond man's knowledge, will inevitably recognize the Creator and His handiwork. How, then, are we turned away from the true faith: *Such is God your*

Lord. His is the dominion. There is no god but He. Why, then, turn you away? (39:6)

Having outlined this clear vision of the signs testifying to God's absolute Oneness and all encompassing power, the section shows people's positions at the parting of the ways between belief and disbelief.

If you believe, you will not increase His kingdom in any way. If you disbelieve, this too will not affect His kingdom in any adverse way. He, however, does not like people to be ungrateful: *And He is not well-pleased with ingratitude from His servants.* (39:7) The ultimate end of the journey is to God. There can be neither escape from Him nor refuge with anyone else: *Again, to your Lord is the return, so He will tell you what you had been doing.* (39:7) You can hide nothing from Him: *Truly, He is Knowing of what is in the breasts.* (39:7)

The first passage touched people's hearts by telling them about their existence, how they are all created from a single soul and how its mate was also created from it. *And when some distress afflicted the human being, he calls to his Lord as one who turns in repentance to Him.* \(39:8) It told them about the creation of animals in pairs, and how we are created in three depths of darkness inside the mother's belly. It touched on how God's hand gave them their human characteristics and their ability to grow and develop.

When the human being suffers affliction, he cries out to his Lord, turning to Him for help; but once He bestows upon him a favor by His grace, he forgets what he cried and prayed for earlier, and claims that others are equal to God, thus leading others astray from His path: *Again, when He granted him divine blessing from Himself, he forgets that for which he had been calling to Him before and he laid on rivals to God to cause others to go astray from His way.* (39:8)

The result is to go astray, moving away from God's way which has one form, namely, acknowledging His Oneness and addressing worship and love to Him alone. Believing in God does nor admit any partnership in our heart, be that a partnership of wealth, children, home country, land, friend or relative. Should such a partnership be found in the human heart, it means acknowledging some beings as equal to God. Thus it allows a brief enjoyment in this life and ends in the fire of hell: *Say: Take joy in your ingratitude for awhile. Truly, you are of the Companions of the Fire.* (39:8) Every enjoyment in this life is small no matter how long it endures. Furthermore, anyone's span of life is brief no matter to what old age he attains. Indeed, the life of the entire human race on this earth is merely a brief en-

joyment when compared to God's days.

Juxtaposed with this depressing picture of the human being is another showing him standing in awe, remembering God in all situations, pleasant or distressing. He goes through his life on earth without ever losing consciousness of the Day of Judgment. He always looks up to his Lord, hoping for His grace. It is from such a bond with God that true knowledge emerges, providing full awareness of the truth: *Is he one who is morally obligated during the night watch, one who prostrates himself or one who is standing up in prayer being fearful of the world to come and hoping for the mercy of his Lord?* (39:9)

All the elements provided here, sincere devotion, the dread of what may happen in the life to come, the hope for God's grace, the purity of heart that opens the locks that prevent understanding, giving our hearts the blessing of clear perception all draw a bright picture which is the opposite of the one drawn in the previous sign. Hence, it is necessary to draw the comparison: *Say: Are those who know on the same level as those who know not? Only those imbued with intuition recollect.* (39:9) True knowledge is that which understands the truth and opens one's mind to the need to be in touch with the fundamental truths in the universe. True knowledge is not a host of pieces of information that clutter the mind without leading to any understanding of the fundamentals of existence.

The way to true knowledge and enlightened information then is devout worship, a sensitive heart, being mindful of the life to come, entertaining strong hopes of benefiting from God's mercy and of being conscious of God. Those who limit themselves to individual experiences and superficial vision are no more than collectors of information. They will never attain the rank of people with knowledge.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Try to answer the following questions based on the signs you have just studied:

What other solutions can you think of?
What are their advantages and disadvantages?
Are we missing any relevant facts?
Is there anything we need to find out before we can decide which solution is best?
What are the criteria for judging solutions in this case?
How will we know if a solution is a good one?
Why do people/have people behaved in the ways that cause the problem?
Can you think of other cases of this problem or similar problems?
How did the people involved try to solve them?
What results did that have?
Could we use the same solution, or is our case different in an important way?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities

ASK YOURSELF:

What do you think is the main issue in each of the Quranic examples?
Let me see if I understand you; do you mean x or y?
How does this relate to our discussion (problem, issue)?
Could you give me an example?
Would this be an example?
Could you explain that further?
Would you say more about ht?
Why do you say that?
What do you think so-and-so meant by his remark?

LESSON 59(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY EXPLORING IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

Critical thinkers can take statements, recognize their implications (i.e., if x is true, then y must also be true) and develop a fuller, more complete understanding of their meaning. They realize that to accept a statement one must also accept its implications. They can explore both implications and consequences at length. When considering beliefs that relate to actions or policies. critical thinkers assess the consequences of acting on those beliefs.

QURANIC CHAPTER 39: THE TROOPS (AL-ZUMAR) SIGNS 39:10-39:21

Makkah: *Say: O My servants who believed!*
Be God-conscious of your Lord.
For those who did good in the present,
there is benevolence, and the earth of God
is that which is extensive.
Only ones who remain steadfast will have their compensation without reckoning. (39:10)
Say: Truly, I was commanded to worship God,
one who is sincere and devoted in the way of life to Him. (39:11)
And I was commanded that I be the first
of the ones who submit to God. (39:12)
Say: Truly, I fear if I rebelled against my Lord
the punishment of a tremendous Day. (39:13)
Say: God alone I worship as one sincere
and devoted in the way of life to Him. (39:14)
So worship what you would other than Him.
Say: Truly, the ones who are losers are those who lost themselves
and their people on the Day of Resurrection.
Truly, that is a clear loss. (39:15)
They will have overshadowings above from the fire
and beneath them, overshadowings.
With that, God frightens His servants.
O my servants! Be God-conscious of Me! (39:16)
And those who avoided false deities so that they worship them
not and were penitent to God, for them are good tidings.
So give good tidings to My servants, (39:17)
those who listen to the saying of the Quran and
follow the fairer of it. Those are those whom God guided.
And those, they are imbued with intuition. (39:18)
Against whom was realized the word of punishment?
Will you be saving him from the fire? (39:19)

But those who were God-conscious of their Lord,
for them are the highest chambers
with the highest chambers built above them,
beneath which rivers run.
This is the solemn declaration of God.
God never breaks His promise. (39:20)
Have you not considered that God caused to descend water
from heaven and threaded fountains in the earth,
again, brings out crops by it of hues, ones that are at variance?
Again, they wither so you see them
as ones that are growing yellow.
Again, He makes them chaff.
Truly, in this is a reminder for those imbued with intuition. (39:21)

COMMENTARY°

The section then addresses the believers, requiring them to remain God-conscious and to ensure that they always do good. They should use their life on earth, short as it is, as a means to earn everlasting reward in the life to come: [Thus speaks God] *Say: O My servants who believed!* (39:10)

It is important to note here how the Arabic text is phrased. The words between brackets, 'thus speaks God', are not in the text. They are added to remove confusion. The text should originally read: *Say to My servants*, but the Prophet is made to address them, because an address alerts the addressees and makes them more aware of what is to come. When the Prophet addresses them, he does not call them as his servants, because they are God's servants, not his. This means that he is addressing them in God's name, making the address from God directly to them. The Prophet is merely the means by which the address is given.

God, the Creator of humanity, knows that leaving one's land is hard. It involves abandoning one's relatives and the people with whom one has close ties, leaving the place where one can easily find work and earn a living, to go to a new place where one is a stranger. This is not an easy thing for anyone. Therefore, the section refers here to patience in adversity and how it is generously rewarded by God: *For those who did good in the present, there is benevolence, and the earth of God is that which is extensive. Only ones who remain steadfast will have their compensation without reckoning.* (39:10) Thus, God's servants feel His care and are touched as they see that when they have to undertake something hard God turns to them with care and grace. He opens for them what compensates for land, coun-

try, family and relatives, giving them a reward without count.

This declaration by the Prophet: (39:11-39:13) outlining what he is commanded to do with regard to worship, devotion and submission is very important in keeping the belief in God's Oneness pure, as the Quranic message wants it to be. In this respect, the Prophet is one of God's servants. He does not exceed that position. In their servitude to God, all people over all creation.

The declaration is made once more, with the Prophet's announcement that he will stick to his way, leaving the idolaters to their way and the painful end to which that leads: (39:14-39:15)

Once more the Prophet announces: I am unwavering in following my way, addressing all worship to God and submitting myself to Him alone. As for you, you can follow any way you want, worship whomever you wish, but this will lead you to the worst imaginable loss: a loss of oneself as one goes to hell, and the loss of family and kin, be they believers or unbelievers. If those relatives are believers, the idolaters will have lost them as each group goes their separate ways, and if they are ungrateful, the loss is the same as they all will have lost themselves in hell: *So worship what you would other than Him. Say: Truly, the ones who are losers are those who lost themselves and their people on the Day of Resurrection. Truly, that is a clear loss.* (39:15)

We then have a picture showing the extent of the loss: *They will have overshadowings above from the fire and beneath them, overshadowings.* (39:16) It is a scene that strikes real fear in people's hearts, showing the fire in layers that engulfs people from above and below. They are seen within these layers as they close in on them from all sides. Yet these layers are fire. God shows this picture to His servants while they are on earth and still have the chance to change their ways: *With that, God frightens His servants. O my servants!* (39:16) He calls on them warning them so that they may choose the way to safety: *Be God-conscious of Me!* (39:16)

On the other side stand those who are safe, having feared this fate and done what is necessary to avoid it: *O My servants! Be God-conscious of Me! And those who avoid false deities so that they should not worship them and are penitent to God, for them are glad tidings. So give good tidings to My servants,* (39:17)

False deities are referred to here by the word *taghut*, which implies an exaggerated sense of exceeding the bounds. Those who shun the worship of *taghut* are the ones who reject the worship of anyone other than God in any form whatsoever. They are the ones who turn to God, stand in front of Him and worship Him alone. These have

good news issued to them directly from on high. The Prophet is giving them this good news by God's order: The fact that this news comes from on high and is delivered by the noble Messenger is in itself a great blessing.

One quality of such people is that they listen to whatever is being said, but their hearts and minds pick up only the best of it and discard the rest. Thus, the only words that they actually receive are the best words that improve and purify people's hearts and souls. A good soul is always ready to receive good words and respond to them, while the one which is foul receives only what is foul: *those who listen to the saying of the Quran and follow the fairer of it, those are those whom God guided. And those, they are imbued with intuition.* (39:18) He knows that they are genuinely good in their hearts and souls and He, therefore, guided them to listen and respond to the best of what is said. Guidance comes only from God.

Before showing us the blessings these people enjoy in the life to come, the section states that those who worshipped false deities have already reached hell. Who can save them from its fire, then? *Against whom was realized the word of punishment? Will you be saving him from the fire?* (39:19) This address is made to the Prophet. If he cannot save them from the fire, who else can?

As against this, those who are God-fearing will have lofty mansions raised upon mansions high, beneath which running waters flow. This is God's promise. Never does God fail to fulfil His promise. *But those who were God-conscious of their Lord, for them are the highest chambers with the highest chambers built above them, beneath which rivers run. This is the solemn declaration of God. God never breaks His promise.* (39:20)

That which follows such rainfall is described thus: *Have you not considered that God caused to descend water from heaven and threaded fountains in the earth, again, brings out crops by it of hues, ones that are at variance?* (39:21) This applies to the rivers running on the surface of the earth as well as the rivers that run underneath its surface when water seeps underground. It then forms springs or wells. It is God's hand that prevents it from going too far into the earth making it impossible to bring up again.

This growing, fresh plant that is full of life attains its full growth and completes its life cycle, *Again, they wither so you see them as ones that are growing yellow.* (39: 21) It has completed its life as ordained in the system of the universe. It is now ripe for harvest. *Again, He makes them chaff.* (39: 21) Its role in life is now completed as it was determined by the Giver of life. *Truly, in this is a reminder for*

those imbued with intuition. (39: 21) These are the ones who reflect, making use of the insight God has granted them.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Are you able to write a DBQ (Document Based Question) to examine a point of view of the Quranic signs you have just studied using an analytical tool called SOAPS?

S = subject: What is the Quranic sign about (make it brief, one sentence)

O = occasion: What is going on at the time?

A = audience: To whom is it addressed?

P = purpose: What is the purpose of the Quranic sign?

S = speaker: Who is the speaker? Give some information about this person.

HOW WOULD YOU EVALUATE YOURSELF AT THIS POINT? I AM AT:•

Stage One: The Unreflective Thinker unaware of significant problems in my thinking)

Stage Two: The Challenged Thinker aware of problems in my thinking

Stage Three: The Beginning Thinker trying to improve but without regular practice

Stage Four: The Practicing Thinker who recognizes the necessity of regular practice

Stage Five: The Advanced Thinker who knows I advance in accordance with my practice

Stage Six: The Master Thinker: skilled and insightful thinking has become second nature to me

LESSON 59(3). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT BELIEF IN ONE GOD (*TAWHID*)

The greatest emphasis in the Quran is on the Oneness or Unity of God (*tawhid*, monotheism) which implies belief that God is One. He created the universe and all that is in it and that at every moment there is a new creation. *Were We wearied by the first creation? No! They are perplexed about a new creation.* (50:15) He created moral order among us where we are judged according to the merit of our deeds: *Whoever does the weight of an atom of good will see it. Whoever does the weight of an atom of the worst will see it.* (99:7-99:8)

We are not judged arbitrarily: *Know that God will never be One Who Causes to Change a divine blessing when He was gracious to a folk unless they first change what is within themselves. And, truly, God is Hearing, Knowing.* (8:53)

This moral order works without any favor, not only in the case of individuals, but also in the case of societies and peoples: *Mention when Moses said to his folk: O my folk! Remember the divine blessing of God on you when He assigned Prophets among you and assigned kings and gives you what He gave not to anyone of the worlds.* (5:20)

God has entered into covenant with human beings within the limits of this moral order with people as such and not with particular nations or races: *O those who believed! Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God and let not that you hate a folk drive you into not dealing justly. Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness (taqwa). Be God-conscious of God. Truly, God is Aware of what you do.* (5:8)

Reason: First of all, our proof of our belief ultimately depends upon our ability to reason. Without reason, we would not be able to understand the Quranic signs nor respond to their message. The connection between faith and reason is the key to our Quranic critical thinking. It is through this connection that our thoughts and emotions grow into a harmony with each other. The Quran repeatedly asks us to think about the signs of God in the universe and within ourselves, to understand God's presence within us and in the universe, and ultimately to find the truth. The concept of the Quranic signs seeks creates a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those who have intuition recollect.* (38:29)

Good deeds: Proof that we believe in the One God (unity) is through competing with one another in good deeds, (3:114; 23:61) *Do good. Truly God loves the ones who are doers of good.* (2:195) *And among the good deeds is to obey God and to obey the Messenger.* (5:92) Note that 5:92 commands us to obey God and to obey the Messenger. It does not say: obey God and obey Muhammad as a Messenger was sent to many different communities.

QURANIC CHAPTER 39: THE TROOPS (AL-ZUMAR) SIGNS 39:22-39:31

Makkah: *So is whose breast God has expanded*
for submission to God,
in a light from His Lord?
So woe to their hearts,
ones that harden against the Remembrance of God.
Those are clearly going astray. (39:22)
God sent down the fairer discourse, a Book,
one that is consistent in its often repeated parts of the Quran
by which shiver the skins of those who dread their Lord.
Again, their skins and their hearts become gentle
with the Remembrance of God.
That is the guidance of God.
With it He guides whom He wills.
And whomever God causes to go astray,
there is not for him anyone who guides. (39:23)
Is he, then, one who fends off a dire punishment with his face
on the Day of Resurrection?
And it will be said to the ones who are unjust:
Experience what you had been earning! (39:24)
Those before them denied
and so the punishment approached them
from where they are not aware. (39:25)
So God caused them to experience degradation
in this present life.
But the punishment of the world to come is greater
if they had been knowing! (39:26)
And, certainly, We propounded for humanity in this,
the Quran, every kind of parable
so that perhaps they will recollect, (39:27)
an Arabic Recitation without any crookedness
so that perhaps they would be God-conscious. (39:28)
God propounded a parable of a man owned
by quarreling ascribed associates
and a man belonging to another man.
Are they both equal in likeness?
The Praise belongs to God. But most of them know not. (39:29)
*Truly, **you** are mortal and, truly, they are mortal.* (39:30)
Again, truly, on the Day of Resurrection before your Lord
you will strive against one another. (39:31)

COMMENTARY°

How about one whose heart God has opened to the Quranic message, and thus receives light from his Lord? Just like He sends water from the skies to cause vegetation of various colors and forms to grow, God bestows from on high a reminder which is received by hearts that are alive, and that open up and react to such life. By contrast, hardened hearts receive it like a rock that cannot embrace life. God opens to the Quranic message those hearts that He knows to be good. These hearts receive the light of the Quranic message and they shine and radiate. The gulf between these hearts and the ones that are hardened is wide indeed: *So is whose breast God has expanded for submission to God, in a light from His Lord? So woe to their hearts, ones that harden against the Remembrance of God. Those are clearly going astray.* (39:22)

Hearts do not shiver in this way unless God's guidance prompts them to respond. God knows the true feelings of these hearts and rewards them with either His guidance or by letting them go astray: *God sent down the fairer discourse, a Book, one that is consistent in its often repeated parts of the Quran by which shiver the skins of those who dread their Lord. Again, their skins and their hearts become gentle with the Remembrance of God. That is the guidance of God. With it He guides whom He wills. And whomever God causes to go astray, there is not for him anyone who guides.*(39:23) He allows such people to go astray because He knows that they have gone so far into error that they will never respond to guidance.

The chapter then shows what awaits those who chose to go astray on the Day of Judgment. It paints a very depressing picture at the time when results are given: *Is he, then, one who fends off a dire punishment with his face on the Day of Resurrection?*(39:24)

Normally a person uses his hands and body to protect his face from fire or harmful objects. In this case, however, he cannot use his hands or legs to save himself from the fire; instead, he uses his face for protection, which describes a case of great confusion and hardship. In the midst of all this difficulty and suffering they are faced with strong censure and given the results of their lives' actions. What a terrible result they have to face: *And it will be said to the ones who are unjust: Experience what you had been earning!* (39:24)

The chapter then speaks about the ungrateful who stood in opposition to the Prophet, showing them what happened to the ungrateful of earlier communities, so that they may save themselves from a similar fate:

Among those who lived before were those who were ungrateful,

and so suffering befell them from where they could not perceive. God gave them a taste of humiliation in this world. Yet much greater will be the suffering of the life to come, if they but knew it! *Those before them denied and so the punishment approached them from where they are not aware. So God caused them to experience degradation in this present life. But the punishment of the world to come is greater if they had been knowing!* (39: 25-39:26)

Such is the outcome faced by the ungrateful in both lives, in this world and the next. In this life, God made them taste humiliation, and in the life to come they will face a greater suffering. God's law will continue to operate, the fates of past generations remain witnesses to the truth, God's warnings concerning the Day of Judgment remain in force, their chance to save themselves continues, and this Quran remains available to those who will heed the warnings. *And, certainly, We propounded for humanity in this, the Quran, every kind of parable so that perhaps they will recollect, an Arabic Recitation without any crookedness so that perhaps they would be God-conscious. God propounded a parable of a man owned by quarreling ascribed associates and a man belonging to another man. Are they both equal in likeness? The Praise belongs to God. But most of them know not.* (39:27-39:29)

God draws an analogy citing the examples of two of His servants: one believes in His Oneness and one ascribes divinity to others beside God. He compares them to two slaves: one is owned by several people who are at odds with each other about who owns him; he is caught between them, while each of them requires him to do certain things. He is at a loss, not knowing which way to turn and cannot manage to satisfy them all because of their contradictory orders. The other is owned by one master, and he knows what his master wants and is clear about his desires and requirements.

They are definitely unequal. The one who has one master enjoys consistency and knows what is expected of him. His energy is spent in a consistent way and the road ahead of him is clear. The other, who has several masters, is always suffering anxiety and worry. He does not feel settled. He is unable to satisfy even one of his masters, let alone them all.

This comparison accurately describes the nature of believing in God's Oneness as opposed to the nature of idolatry. The one who believes in God's Oneness goes along his earth's journey equipped with clear guidance, because his eyes are looking up to one guiding star in the sky. Thus his way is straight. He knows one source for life, strength and sustenance; harm and benefit; grace and deprivation.

He sets on his straight way to this source, strengthening his ties with it. He is assured of his single goal and does not lose sight of it. Thus, his energy is streamlined, assured of his work's objective. His feet are set firm on the ground while his gaze looks to God in heaven.

This telling analogy is followed by a comment praising God who has chosen for His servants what gives them comfort, safety, security and contentment. Yet they deviate from the truth, and most of them do not even know it.

This is but one of the numerous examples the Quran gives people so that they may reflect. It is a clear Quran in the Arabic tongue. It addresses human nature with simple logic. In it there is no ambiguity, equivocation or deviation.

Commenting on the preceding passage, the chapter stares that the dispute between the Prophet and his opponents is left to God for judgment, which will occur after they have all died. He will requite the liars as they deserve and give generous reward to the people of the truth.

Truly, you are mortal and, truly, they are mortal. Again, truly, on the Day of Resurrection before your Lord you will strive against one another. (39:30-39:31)

Death is the end of every living thing. Only God remains. In death all people share the same end, including Muhammad, God's last Messenger. Mention of this fact here comes within the framework of the great truth the chapter emphasizes, namely, God's absolute Oneness. This is followed by stating what comes after death, because death is not the final end: it is a link in the chain of life that has been so ordained that no part of it passes in vain. On the Day of Judgment people will stand in front of God disputing with one another over what they used to claim, and how they reacted to the guidance God sent them.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

WHAT IS ACTIVE QURANIC LISTENING?

Model active listening to responses by summarizing in your own

words the content or gist of their answers.
Expand on the exercise by calling on classmates to do same.
Take time for thought processing in answering.
Create the pause for a thoughtful response rather than expect an immediate reply.
Allow for unexpected turns that suit the purpose and invite gestalt!
Use shock or disruption to shake up a rather boring experience.
Work in small group exercises modeled on questioning.
Merge to incrementally larger groups.
Give report from merged group.
Provide for peer feedback and class discussion.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I realized that I sometimes think with a bias in favor of myself.
I realized I sometimes become irritable over small things.
I realized that I have sometimes said something 'irrational' to get my way.
I realized I have sometimes tried to impose my will upon others.
I remembered I have sometimes failed to speak my mind when I felt strongly about something and then later felt resentment.

Lesson 59(4). Critical Thinking Quranic Moral Trait God-consciousness (*taqwa*)

The Quran is revealed to produce this attitude of God-consciousness among people: *an Arabic Recitation without any crookedness so that perhaps they would be God-conscious.* (39:28) It is the presence of this moral attitude which saves people from destruction (27:53; 41:18) and it is this which helps them maintain God's commands in their conjugal life, (2:24; 4:129) in sacrifice, (5:30; 22:37) in different aspects of social life, (2:177) and in fulfilling faithfully their social obligations. (25:63-25:74)

To be God-conscious (*muttaqi*) (to guard against evil) is to exhibit virtuous conduct: *It is not virtuous conduct that you turn your faces towards the East or the West. Rather virtuous conduct consists of: Whoever believes in God and the Last Day, and the angels, and the Book, and the Prophets. Proof of belief in the One God is in one's actions, behavior or practicing of this belief which includes, among other practices: The practice of good deeds: to spend out of one's substance, out of love for God, for kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, for the ransom of prisoners-of-war; to be steadfast in prayers, and to pay the purifying alms* (zakat)*; to fulfill the contracts which have been made; and to be firm and patient in pain (or suffering), adversity, and times of danger. Such people as follow these are possessed of true God-consciousness.* (2:177-2:178)

The better and more lasting reward of the Lord is for those who believe and put their trust in Him; those who avoid the greater crimes and shameful deeds, and, even when they are angry, they forgive; those who hearken to their Lord, and establish regular prayer; who conduct their affairs by mutual consultation; who spend out of what God bestows on them for sustenance; who, when an oppressive wrong is inflicted on them, (are not cowed but) help and defend themselves; and those who recompense injury with injury in degree equal thereto and, better still, forgive and make reconciliation. But indeed if any do help and defend themselves after a wrong is done to them, against such there is no cause of blame. The blame is only against those who oppress people with wrongdoing and insolently transgress beyond bounds through the land, defying right and justice; for such there will be a grievous penalty. But indeed showing patience and forgiveness is an exercise of courageous will and resolution in the conduct of affairs. God-consciousness results in developing a sense of humility.

Quranic Chapter 39: The Troops (al-Zumar) Signs 39:32-39:41

Makkah: *Then, who does greater wrong*
than one who lied against God
and denied sincerity when it drew near him?

Is there not in hell a place of lodging
for the ones who are ungrateful? (39:32)
And he who brought about sincerity
and he who established it as true, those,
they are the ones who are God-conscious. (39:33)
For them is all that they will with their Lord.
That is the recompense of the ones who are doers of good. (39:34)
Certainly, God absolves them of bad deeds of
what they do and gives them recompense in compensation
for the fairer of what they had been doing. (39:35)
Is not God One Who Suffices for His servants?
They frighten you with those other than Him.
And whom God causes to go astray,
there is not for him anyone who guides. (39:36)
And whomever God guides,
there is not for him anyone who leads astray.
Is not God Almighty, The Possessor of Requital? (39:37)
And, truly, if you had asked them:
Who created the heavens and the earth?
They would, certainly, say: God.
Say: Considered you what you call to other than God?
If God wanted some harm for me,
would they be ones who remove His harm from me?
Or if He wanted mercy for me would they (f) be
ones who hold back His mercy?
Say: God is enough for me.
In Him put their trust the ones who put their trust. (39:38)
Say: O my folk! Truly, act according to your ability.
I am one who acts. You will know (39:39)
to whom punishment approaches covering him
with shame and on whom alights an abiding punishment. (39:40)
Truly, We caused the Book to descend to you
for humanity with The Truth.
So whoever was truly guided, it is only for himself.
And whoever went astray, goes astray but for himself.
You are not over them a trustee. (39:41)

COMMENTARY°

These five signs (39:36-39:40) epitomize the logic of faith: Simple, clear, forceful and profound. Thus it was in the Prophet's heart, and thus it should be in every heart that advocates a cause. These signs represent the line that such a believer should follow. They pro-

vide his light as he goes along his clear and straight way.

It is reported that these signs were revealed as a result of the ungrateful trying to scare the Prophet, claiming that their deities, which he described in disrespectful terms, would be sure to harm him. They warned him that unless he desisted, their gods would cause him much trouble. However, the significance of these signs is far broader than this. They describe the true nature of the battle between an advocate of the truth and all the forces that line up against him. They show the confidence and reassurance a believer feels as he gives these forces their true measure.

Yes, indeed. *They frighten you with those other than Him.* (39:36) So, what can scare him when God is with him? What can generate any feeling of fear in him after he has taken the position of a servant of God and fulfilled the responsibilities that such a position confers? Who can doubt God's sufficiency for His servants when He is the Almighty who holds sway over all His creation?

How could he be frightened when those inferiors do not frighten one who is protected by God? *And whom God causes to go astray, there is not for him anyone who guides.* (39:36) Is there anyone on earth who is not inferior to God? It is a very simple issue. It requires no argument or hard thinking. It is God opposed by some who are inferior to Him. This leaves no room for doubt concerning the outcome.

God's will is the one that is done. He determines everything for His servants, including what takes place within them, their inner thoughts and feelings: *And whomever God guides, there is not for him anyone who leads astray.* (39:37) He knows who deserves to go astray and who deserves to be guided. He lets them have what they deserve. When He has made His judgment, no one can alter it.

Yes, indeed, He is. *Is not God Almighty, The Possessor of Requital?* (39:37) He requites everyone as they deserve, inflicting retribution on those who deserve it. When anyone fulfils the duties incumbent on God's servants, He extends His protection to them. How can such a person, then, fear anyone?

The same truth is then re-emphasized in a different way, using their own logic and what they, by their very nature, acknowledge of God's attributes: *And, truly, if you had asked them: Who created the heavens and the earth? They would, certainly, say: God. Say: Considered you what you call to other than God? If God wanted some harm for me, would they be ones who remove His harm from me? Or if He wanted mercy for me would they (f) be ones who hold back His mercy?* (39:38)

When this notion is firmly planted in a believer's heart, the matter is settled. There is no more argument. The only fear or hope such a believer may have is centered on what comes from God. It is He who is sufficient for His servants, and in Him all trust is placed: *Say: God is enough for me. In Him put their trust the ones who put their trust.* (39:38)

This gives believers all they need of trust and reassurance, leaving no room for worry or fear of anything. They go along their way in full confidence as to the end they will meet: *Say: O my folk! Truly, act according to your ability. I am one who acts. You will know to whom punishment approaches covering him with shame and on whom alights an abiding punishment.* (39:39-39:40) Do what you can, the way you wish. I am going my way entertaining no desire to change or deviate even slightly from it, free from worry or anxiety. You will come to know who will suffer humiliation in this life and everlasting punishment in the life to come.

The truth is the nature of this book: *Truly, We caused the Book to descend to you for humanity with The Truth. So whoever was truly guided, it is only for himself. And whoever went astray, goes astray but for himself.* (39:41) It is clear in the law it sets out and in its system: it is on the basis of this truth that the universe is sustained; the truth that links the code of human life outlined in this book to the system of the universe. This truth has now been bestowed on humanity giving them guidance on how to live by its provisions. You, Prophet, are only the means to deliver it to them. It is up to them to choose what they wish for and how to deal with it. Each one of them can choose either guidance or error, and each will define his or her own fate. No responsibility attaches to you for what they choose: *You are not over them a trustee.* (39: 41)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Ask: What exactly is the question I am trying to ask?

How does it relate to my goals, purposes, and needs?

1. Wherever possible take questions one by one. State the question as clearly and precisely as they can.

2. Study the question to make clear the kind of question they are dealing with. Figure out, for example, what sorts of things they are going to have to do to answer it. Distinguish questions over which they have some control from questions over which they have no control. Set aside the questions over which they have no control, concentrating their efforts on those questions they can potentially answer.

3. Figure out the information they need and actively seek that information.

4. Carefully analyze and interpret the information they collect, drawing what reasonable inferences they can.

5. Figure out their options for action. What can they do in the short term? In the long term? Distinguish questions under their control from questions beyond their control. Recognize explicitly their limitations as far as money, time, and power.

6. Evaluate their options, taking into account their advantages and disadvantages in the situation they are in.

7. Adopt a strategic approach to the question and follow through on that strategy. This may involve direct action or a carefully thought-through wait-and-see strategy.

8. When they act, monitor the implications of their action as they begin to emerge. Be ready at a moment's notice to revise their strategy if the situation requires it. Be prepared to shift their strategy or their analysis or question, or all three, as more information about the question becomes available to them.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I frequently evaluated my listening.
I actively listening for main points.
I was able to summarize what my instructor said in my own words.
I was able to elaborate what is meant by key terms.
I learned to frequently evaluate my reading.
I am trying to read the Quranic text actively.
I am asking questions as I read.
I am learning to distinguish what I understand from what I don't.

LESSON 59(5). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE

Virtuous conduct, integrity or moral uprightness, the state of being whole and undivided or a sense of inner and outer unity develops through moral discipline. It produces the attitude of God-consciousness (*taqwa*) when the discipline of prayer, fasting, giving the purifying alms, and pilgrimage is practiced. People are commanded to guard strictly their habit of formal prayers and stand before God in a devout frame of mind, (2:238) to pay the purifying alms, (98:5) to spend in charity secretly and openly (25:29)—a beautiful loan to God (72:20)—a bargain that will never fail, (25:29) involving a glad tidings for the believers (22:34) and a cause of prosperity (31:5) and spiritual joy. (20:139) Those people who follow these principles are on the right path towards the moral trait of integrity under the true guidance of the Lord. (31:5; 97:5) They remove the stain of evil from the people (11:114) and help them refrain from shameful and unjust deeds. (29:45) It is the practice of all believing people that when God grants them power in the land, they enjoin the right and forbid the wrong.

QURANIC CHAPTER 39: THE TROOPS (AL-ZUMAR) SIGNS 39:42-39:52

Makkah: *God calls the souls to Himself*
at the time of their death
and those that die not during their slumbering.
He holds back those for whom He decreed death
and sends the others back for a term, that which is determined.
Truly, in that are signs for a folk who reflect. (39:42)
Or took they to themselves other than God intercessors?
Say: Even though they had not been possessing anything
and they are not reasonable? (39:43)
Say: To God belongs all intercession.
His is the dominion of the heavens and the earth.
Again, to Him you will be returned. (39:44)
And when God alone was remembered,
the hearts shuddered of those
who believe not in the world to come.
But when those who,
other than Him, were remembered,
that is when they rejoice at the good tidings! (39:45)
Say: O God! One Who is Originator of the heavens and the earth!
One Who Knows of the unseen and the visible!
Thou wilt give judgment among Thy servants
about what they had been at variance in it. (39:46)

And if those who did wrong had whatever is in and on the earth
altogether and the like with it, they would,
truly, have offered it as ransom for the evil punishment
on the Day of Resurrection.
And it will show itself to them
from God what they not be anticipating. (39:47)
And it will show itself to them, the evil deeds
that they earned and they will be surrounded
by what they had been ridiculing. (39:48)
Then, when harm afflicted the human being,
he called to Us. Again, We granted him divine blessing from Us.
He would say: I was only given this because of my knowledge.
Nay! It is only a test, but most of them know not. (39:49)
Truly, those who were before them
said it so what they had been earning availed them not. (39:50)
The evil deeds they earned lit on them.
And as for those who did wrong among these,
evil deeds of what they earned will light on them.
They will not be ones who frustrate Him. (39:51)
Madinah (39:52)

COMMENTARY°

Such is the reality of the situation between God's messengers and all earthly forces opposing them. The question then is what is their message, and how should they react towards those who deny them? It is God who has power over them. They are in His hands when they are asleep or awake, or indeed in all situations and conditions. He determines what to do with them: *God calls the souls to Himself at the time of their death and those that die not during their slumbering.* (39:42) God gathers the souls of those who die, and He also takes away people's souls when they are asleep, even though they are not dead. During sleep, these souls are temporarily removed. If the term of some is over, God will retain their souls and they cannot wake up. Those whose term of life continues will have their souls returned and they will wake up. Thus, people's souls are in God's hands whether they are asleep or awake: *He holds back those for whom He decreed death and sends the others back for a term, that which is determined. Truly, in that are signs for a folk who reflect.* (39:42)

Such being the case, with the Prophet having no responsibility for others, it is up to each of them individually: if they follow divine guidance, they benefit themselves; and if they choose error, they bear the responsibility for their choice. They will have to face the reck-

oning, for they will not be left unaccountable. What hope, then, do they have for salvation? *Say: Even though they had not been possessing anything and they are not reasonable? Say: To God belongs all intercession. His is the dominion of the heavens and the earth. Again, to Him you will be returned.* (39:43-39:44) The question here is sarcastic, referring to their claims that they worship the statues of angels in order that these bring them closer to God. The question is followed by an emphatic statement that all intercession belongs to God: it is He who permits whomever He wishes to intercede. Do they think that attributing partners to God is the way to achieve intercession?

The section then describes how strongly they dislike any statement about God's Oneness, while they delight in the attribution of partners with Him, when everything around them in the universe rejects such polytheism:

Whenever God alone is mentioned, the hearts of those who will not believe in the life to come shrink with aversion; but when others are mentioned side by side with Him, they rejoice. *And when God alone was remembered, the hearts shuddered of those who believe not in the world to come. But when those who, other than Him, were remembered, that is when they rejoice at the good tidings!* (39:45)

The sign describes a real situation during the Prophet's time, when the ungrateful delighted at the mention of their false deities, but showed clear dislike when God's Oneness was asserted. Yet the sign also describes a state of affairs that takes place in all environments. Some people do express dislike when they are asked to believe in God alone. When other systems and laws are mentioned, they demonstrate happiness and delight. Only then are they ready to discuss and argue. It is these very people that God is describing in this sign: they are the ones, in all communities and generations, who trample over sound human nature, choose deviation, go and lead others astray. The reply to all such deviation is taught by God to His Messenger whereby the latter says: *Say: O God! One Who is Originator of the heavens and the earth! One Who Knows of the unseen and the visible!* (39:46)

It is a simple prayer that comes from sound human nature looking at the heavens and the earth, that cannot find anyone other than God who could have created them, that acknowledges His creation, and addresses Him by the quality that fits the Originator of the universe, i.e. His knowledge of the imperceptible and all that anyone witnesses. It is He who is fully aware of what is present and what is absent, what is hidden and what is manifest. *You will give judgment*

among Your servants about what they had been at variance in it. (39:46) He is the only judge and arbiter when they all return to Him, as return they must.

The next signs makes an implicit threat within a statement that strikes fear into the hearts of those described as 'wrongdoers', which refers to everyone who associates partners, of any type, with God. If those people had in their possession 'all that is on earth,' including everything to which they attach high value and fear to lose should they accept the Quranic message, indeed, if they had 'twice as much', they would willingly offer it all just to be spared the awful suffering they will see with their own eyes on the Day of Resurrection. Added to this is another implicit threat that is equally fearful: *And if those who did wrong had whatever is in and on the earth altogether and the like with it, they would, truly, have offered it as ransom for the evil punishment on the Day of Resurrection. And it will show itself to them from God what they not be anticipating.* (39:47) The chapter does not specify what will become obvious to them, but it is clearly understood that it is terrible, to be feared. It comes from God, and He shows them what they could never have expected.

Again this aggravates their position, because they will see for themselves how evil their deeds were, and they will find themselves engulfed with the warnings that they used to deride and ridicule. *And it will show itself to them, the evil deeds that they earned and they will be surrounded by what they had been ridiculing.* (39:48)

Then follows a description of an ironic situation: they are outspoken in denying God's Oneness, yet when they suffer affliction they turn to none but Him, praying earnestly for His help. When He bestows His grace on them and removes their affliction they revert to their boastful claims and deny His favors: *Then, when harm afflicted the human being, he called to Us. Again, We granted him divine blessing from Us.* (39:49)

This sign describes the human being if he does not accept the truth and turn back to his true Lord, following the path leading to Him and remaining on that path in all situations of strength or weakness. Affliction purges human nature of the desires and ambitions that blur its vision. It removes from it all alien influences that place a barrier between it and the truth. Therefore, when afflicted, it can easily recognize God and turn to Him alone. Yet when the testing times are over, and human nature again finds itself in easy and comfortable circumstances, we forget what we said only a short while earlier. Our nature is again turned away from the truth under the influence of our desires, and we look at God's favors and provisions

only to say: *He would say: I was only given this because of my knowledge.* (39:49) This was said by Korah, in former times, and it is said by everyone who admires what he is able to obtain of wealth or position through some sort of ability or knowledge, forgetting who grants him these, namely the One who has made causes produce their effects and who grants everyone their provisions.

Nay! It is only a test, but most of them know not. (39:49) It is all just a test. The human being either proves himself, shows that he is grateful to God and sets himself on the right way or he denies God's favors, takes the wrong way and goes astray .

By an act of God's grace, the Quran reveals this secret to us. It alerts us to the source of danger, warns us against failure in the test, and thus leaves us no excuse or argument. It reminds us of the fates of those who lived long before us, which were the result of something like the words spoken by many an unbeliever in the past: *I was only given this because of my knowledge.* (39:49)

Those who lived before their time said the same, but of no avail to them was all that they had ever done: for the very evil of their deeds recoiled upon them. Similarly, the wrongdoers among these present people will have the evil of their deeds recoil upon them. They will never be able to frustrate [Gods purpose]. *Truly, those who were before them said it so what they had been earning availed them not.* (39:50)

They are the same deviant words spoken by earlier peoples and which led them to ruin. Nothing of their knowledge, wealth or positions were of benefit to them. The same rule will apply to the present ungrateful, because God's law will never change: *The evil deeds they earned lit on them. And as for those who did wrong among these, evil deeds of what they earned will light on them. They will not be ones who frustrate Him.* (39:51)

Student Assessment

Example of How Critical Thinking Works

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions,** (solve problems, and resolve issues).

Developing Quranic Critical Thinking Skills

Each week, develop a heightened awareness of one of the moral traits that you have studied so far (belief, God-consciousness (*taqwa*) and virtuous

conduct (birr). Focus one week on belief, the next on God-consciousness, etc. For example, if you are focusing on God-consciousness for the week, try to notice when you are being forgetful of God in what you do. When you orally express or write out your views (for whatever reason), ask yourself whether you are clear about what you are trying to say. In doing this, of course, focus on four techniques of clarification:

1. Stating what they are saying explicitly and precisely (with careful consideration given to their choice of words),
2. Elaborating on their meaning in other words,
3. Giving examples of what they mean from experiences they have had,
4. Using analogies, metaphors, pictures, or diagrams to illustrate what they mean.

In other words, you will frequently: state, elaborate, illustrate and exemplify their points. You will regularly ask others to do the same.

Developing Criteria for Evaluation

When evaluating or developing criteria for evaluation, assess both yourselves and others, noting their tendency to favor yourself. Critical thinkers learn to consistently apply standards of evidence and proof to themselves as well as to others. We practice what we advocate for others. We are able to readily admit any discrepancies and inconsistencies in our own thought and behavior. We are fervent believers in what has been justified by our own thought and experience. We bring together the person we want to be with the person that we are. However, it is not uncommon for many people to be inconsistent in applying their standards once their ego is involved. We cannot become egocentric and overrate the positive traits of people who like us and underrate those who do not. If our ego dominates us, we become blind to our understanding. We promote whatever serves our needs and disregard whatever does not support what we want.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I focused on one moral trait each week and I was able to learn how to internalize them.

LESSON 59(6). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT EMPOWERING CONSTANCY, COURAGE

HOW DO I DEVELOP COURAGE (DETERMINATION, CONSTANCY)?

In order to develop courage, you need to question what you learn. It takes courage on your part to admit that some ideas are dangerous and lack truth and to be true to your own thinking, questioning beliefs that you hold deeply. Courage is required to not conform to ideas that you know to be false.

It is the primary duty of the believers to participate actively in the struggle for the establishment of a social order based on peace, harmony, and justice: *And fight them until there be no persecution, and the way of life be for God. Then, if they refrained themselves, then, there is to be no deep seated dislike, but against the ones who are unjust. Fight aggression* (2:193) in which everybody is equal before the law, and people in authority work out their policies after ascertaining the views of the people. *And those who responded to their Lord and performed their formal prayer and their affairs are by counsel among themselves, and who spend of what We provided them.* (42:38)

Courage is having a consciousness of the need to face and fairly address ideas, beliefs, or viewpoints toward which you have strong negative emotions and to which you have not given a serious hearing. This courage is connected with the recognition that ideas considered dangerous or absurd are sometimes rationally justified (in whole or in part) and that conclusions and beliefs inculcated in us are sometimes false or misleading.

In this endeavor to realize the moral law in his individual and social life, the human being has often to contend against evil forces represented in the person of Satan. (15:35-15:40) But it is within his power to resist and overcome them. (6:99) Though the human being is always prone to weakness and susceptible to seduction by the forces of evil, yet his weakness is rectifiable under the guidance of revelation, (2:36) and such people as follow the law of God-consciousness shall be immune from these lapses (3:175) or be cowardly in their behavior. (3:122)

QURANIC CHAPTER 39: THE TROOPS (AL-ZUMAR)
SIGNS 39:53-39:63

Madinah (39:53)
Madinah (39:54)
Makkah: *And follow the fairer*
of what was caused to descend to you
from your Lord before the punishment approaches you suddenly
while you are not aware (39:55)
so that a soul not say: O me that I am regretful for
what I neglected in my responsibility to God

and that I had, truly, been among the ones who deride. (39:56)
Or he may say: If God guided me,
I would, certainly, have been among
the ones who are God-conscious. (39:57)
Or he say at the time he sees the punishment:
If only I might return again, then,
be among the ones who are doers of good. (39:58)
Yea! My signs drew near thee
and you denied them and grew arrogant.
You would have been among the ones who are ungrateful. (39:59)
And on the Day of Resurrection you will see
those who lied against God, their faces,
ones that are clouded over.
Is there not in hell a place of lodging for ones
who increase in pride? (39:60)
And God delivers those who were God-conscious,
keeping them safe.
No evil will afflict them, nor will they feel remorse. (39:61)
God is One Who is Creator of everything.
And He is Trustee over everything. (39:62)
To Him belongs the pass keys of the heavens and the earth.
And those who were ungrateful for the signs of God,
those, they are the ones who are the losers. (39:63)

COMMENTARY°

And follow the fairer of what was caused to descend to you from your Lord before the punishment approaches you suddenly while you are not aware. (39:55) To turn to God in true submission and to surrender oneself once more to Him is all that is needed.

Come on now before it is too late. *So that a soul not say: O me that I am regretful for what I neglected in my responsibility to God and that I had, truly, been among the ones who deride.* (39:56) Alternatively, someone may say that God condemned him to be in error: had He decreed that he would follow divine guidance, he would have been a God-fearing person: *Or he may say: If God guided me, I would, certainly, have been among the ones who are God-conscious.* (39:57) This is a baseless excuse: the chance is offered to everyone, the means are available to all, and the gates are wide open. Yet people deliberately miss out: *Or he say at the time he sees the punishment: If only I might return again, then, be among the ones who are doers of good.* (39:58) This is something that will never be given. Once this life is over, no return is allowed. All people are now at the stage

when they can do what they want. If they miss this chance, all is lost. They will be held to account, and they will be rebuked: *Yea! My signs drew near you and you had denied them and had grown arrogant. You had been among the ones who are ungrateful.* (39:59)

At this point, when the section has brought our feelings and hearts to the Day of Judgment, it shows us the two contrasting images of the ungrateful and the God-conscious on that momentous day:

On the Day of Resurrection you will see those who invented lies about God with their faces darkened. Is not there in hell a proper abode for the arrogant? But God will deliver those who are God-fearing to their place of safety: no harm shall afflict them, nor shall they grieve. *And on the Day of Resurrection you will see those who lied against God, their faces, ones that are clouded over. Is there not in hell a place of lodging for ones who increase in pride?* (39:60)

Now, on the Day of Judgment, they are left in utter humiliation that shows in their faces. The other group are the winners who will not be touched by grief or affliction. These are the God-fearing who, during their lives on earth, paid heed to God's warnings and hoped for His mercy. They are the ones who will be safe: *And God delivers those who were God-conscious, keeping them safe. No evil will afflict them, nor will they feel remorse.* (39:61)

God is the Creator of everything, and of all things He is the Guardian. His are the keys of the heavens and the earth. This is the truth that everything in the universe confirms. No one can ever claim to create anything. No rational being can claim that this universe came into existence without a creator, when everything in it testifies to elaborate planning and a clear purpose behind creation. Nothing in it, from the very small to the very large, is left to chance: *God is One Who is Creator of everything. And He is Trustee over everything.* (39:62) Into His control the heavens and the earth are placed. He conducts their affairs the way He chooses. They operate in accordance with the system He put in place for them. No will other than His interferes with anything. This is acknowledged by human nature, confirmed by practical fact and endorsed by reason and conscience.

They have lost the understanding that makes their lives on earth consistent and harmonious with the life of the universe. *o Him belongs the pass keys of the heavens and the earth. And those who were ungrateful for the signs of God, those, they are the ones who are the losers.*(39:63) They have lost the comfort of divine guidance, the beauty of faith, the reassurance of belief and the sweetness of certainty. On the Day of Judgment they will lose their own souls and their families. Hence, the term 'losers' applies to them in all its

shades and connotations.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

LEARN TO EXPRESS YOUR FEELINGS

Those who have been habitually praised for uncritically accepting others' claims may feel the rug pulled out from under them for a while when expected to think for themselves. Be emotionally supported in these circumstances and encouraged to express the natural hesitancy, discomfort, or anxiety you may experience so you may work your way through these feelings. A willingness to consider unpopular beliefs develops by degrees. You should exercise discretion beginning first with mildly unpopular rather than with extremely unpopular beliefs. If, during the course of the year, an idea or suggestion which at first sounded 'crazy' was proven valuable, you can later be reminded of it, and discuss it at length, and compare it to other events.

Courage is fostered through a consistently open-minded atmosphere. You should be encouraged to honestly consider or doubt any belief. You who disagree with or doubt your peers should be given support. Raise probing questions regarding unpopular ideas which you have hitherto been discouraged from considering. Model intellectual courage by playing devil's advocate. Why does this idea bother you?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I kept an intellectual journal where I described a situation that was emotionally significant to me, that I deeply cared about.
I responded to the situation and wrote about it in my journal.
I realized what was going on in the situation.
I dug beneath the surface.
I assessed the implications of my analysis.
I learned more about myself.

LESSON 59(7). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS

WHAT IS PERSEVERANCE?

Perseverance is being willing and conscious of the need to pursue insights and truths despite difficulties, obstacles, and frustrations; a firm adherence to rational principles despite irrational opposition of others; a sense of the need to struggle with confusion and unsettled questions over an extended period of time in order to achieve deeper understanding or insight. This trait is undermined when others continually provide the answers, do your thinking for you or substitute easy tricks, algorithms, and short cuts for careful, independent thought.

WHAT DOES PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS MEAN?

Perseverance in goodness is an attribute of God: *And whatever you have of divine blessing is from God.* (16:53) and, therefore, it becomes the duty of every person to obey his own impulse to good: *And whoever volunteered good, then, truly, God is One Who is Responsive, Knowing.* (2:158) He should do good as God has been good to all: d*o good even as God did good to you* (28:77) and love those who do good: *And do good. Truly, God loves the ones who are doers of good.* (2:195) Believers hasten in every good work. As all prophets were quick in emulating good works, (21:90) so all people are advised to strive together (as in a race) towards all that is good: *Be forward, then, in good deeds.* (2:148) and virtuous. All good things are for the believers; goodly reward in the hereafter and highest grace of God awaits those who are foremost in good deeds: *some of them are ones who take the lead with good deeds by permission of God. That is the greater grace.* (35:32) Believers are advised to repel evil with what is better, for thereby enmity will change into warm friendship: *Drive back with what is fairer. Then, behold he who between you and between him was enmity as if he had been a protector, a loyal friend.* (41:34) It is often reflective in that students have to go back and think about similar problems that they had faced before and re-analyze them. They do not let difficulties, obstacles and frustrations stop them from pursuing truths with their insight (the capacity to gain an accurate and deep intuitive understanding of a person or thing).

QURANIC CHAPTER 39: THE TROOPS (AL-ZUMAR)
SIGNS 39:64-39:70

Makkah: *Say: Commanded you me*
to worship other than God,
O ones who are ignorant? (39:64)
And, certainly, it was revealed to you
and to those who were before you

*that if **you** ascribe partners with God,*
*certainly, **your** actions will be fruitless and **you** will, certainly,*
be among the ones who are losers. (39:65)
*Nay! Worship **you** God and*
*be **you** among the ones who are thankful!* (39:66)
And they measured not God with His true measure.
And the earth altogether will be His handful
on the Day of Resurrection
when the heavens will be
ones that are rolled up in His right hand.
Glory be to Him! And exalted is He
above partners they ascribe! (39:67)
And the trumpet will be blown.
Then, whoever is in the heavens will swoon
and whoever is in and on the earth,
but he whom God willed.
Again, it will be blown another time.
Then, they will be upright looking on. (39:68)
And the earth will shine with the Light of its Lord
and the Book will be laid down
and the prophets and the witnesses will be brought about.
And it will be decided among them with The Truth.
And they, they will not be wronged. (39:69)
The account of each soul will be paid in full for what it did.
He is greater in knowledge of what they accomplish. (39:70)

COMMENTARY°

In the light of this truth, testified to by the heavens, the earth and every creature in the universe, the Prophet is instructed in how to reply to the idolaters' offer of both parties joining together in the worship of their idols and God Almighty at the same time. It is as if the whole question is a bargain to be struck by compromise: *Say: Commanded you me to worship other than God, O ones who are ignorant?* (39:64) This is the natural reaction to such a stupid offer that betrays nothing but ignorance.

This is followed with a clear warning against associating partners with God, beginning with the prophets and God's messengers who would never entertain even the slightest thought of such association. This, however, serves to alert all others to the truth that in the question of who is to be worshipped, God stands alone without partners, while in the question of offering worship, all humanity, including the prophets and God's messengers, are in the same position

as God's servants: *And, certainly, it was revealed to you and to those who were before you that if you have ascribed partners with God, certainly, your actions will be fruitless and you wilt, certainly, be among the ones who are losers.* (39:65)

This warning against associating partners with God concludes with an order to worship God alone. We are to show gratitude to Him for providing us with guidance to the path to certainty. We should also thank Him for all His countless favors which He bestows on us and which we all enjoy at every moment of our lives: *Nay! Worship you God and be you among the ones who are thankful!* (39:66)

Indeed, they have no clear or true understanding of Him when they associate with Him some of His creatures. *And they measured not God with His true measure.* (39:67) Nor do they worship Him as He should be worshipped. They do not appreciate His Oneness, greatness, majesty and power. Therefore, the chapter reveals to us an aspect of God's great power in the normal Quranic way of drawing images that place before our eyes a fundamental truth: *And the earth altogether will be His handful on the Day of Resurrection when the heavens will be ones that are rolled up in His right hand. Glory be to Him! And exalted is He above partners they ascribe!* (39:67)

The first blow on the trumpet is made, and all creatures who until that moment remained alive on earth and in the heavens fall senseless, except those God spares. We do not know how much time elapses before the second blow is sounded on the trumpet: *And the trumpet will be blown. Then, whoever is in the heavens will swoon and whoever is in and on the earth, but he whom God willed. Again, it will be blown another time. Then, they will be upright looking on.* (39:68) The third blow of gathering them all is not mentioned here. Nor is there mention of the bustling and the crowding, because the scene here is a quiet one, where all move very gradually.

This: *And the earth will shine with the Light of its Lord and the Book will be laid down and the prophets and the witnesses will be brought about. And it will be decided among them with The Truth. And they, they will not be wronged* (39:69) is the earth where all action will take place. Needless to say, there is no light other than the light of its Lord Almighty. It is the book in which all deeds by all creatures are entered. They will testify stating the truth they know. No argument or dispute is mentioned here so as to maintain the atmosphere of majesty and humility before God that permeates the entire scene. *The account of each soul will be paid in full for what it did. He is greater in knowledge of what they accomplish.* (39:69-39:70) There is no need for a word to be said or a voice to be raised.

The whole picture of reckoning, questions asked and answers given, is folded without mention because it does not fit with the ambience of majesty expressed.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What was it like to not understand or be able to do it?
How did you come to understand it?
What was that like?
Was it worth it?
Did it seem worth it at the time?
What made you change your mind?

Will the support seem to the reader to justify the conclusion?
Should I change the conclusion, or beef up the support?
What counter-examples or problems would occur to the reader here?
What do I want to say about them?
How am I interpreting my Quranic source?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I chose one moral trait to strive for in one month.
I focused on how I can develop that positive trait in myself.
I recognized that I was becoming defensive when someone tried to point out a deficiency in my thinking.
I owned up to my own ignorance on the moral trait and began to deal with it.

LESSON 59(8). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT EMPATHETIC ALTRUISM

WHAT IS EMPATHETIC ALTRUISM?

There is yet a higher stage of moral achievement described as selfless concern and love for the welfare of others or altruism (*ihsan*) which signifies performance of moral action in conformity with the moral ideal with the added sense of deep loyalty to the cause of God, done in the most graceful way that is motivated by a unique love for God. Performance of God-conscious actions accompanied by a true faith is only a stage in the moral life of a person which, after several stages, gradually matures into altruism (*ihsan*). Altruism is based on having a deep love for God. Love as a human ideal demands that the human being should love God as the complete embodiment of all moral values above everything else.

Altruism is the belief in or practice of disinterested and selfless concern for the well-being of others. Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another. Empathetic Altruism is to believe in an practice a selfless concern for the well-being of others through sharing the feelings of another.

Empathetic altruism is understanding the need to imaginatively put oneself in the place of others to genuinely understand them. Students must recognize their egocentric tendency to identify truth with their immediate perceptions or longstanding beliefs. Empathetic altruism correlates with the ability to accurately reconstruct the viewpoints and reasoning of others and to reason from premises, assumptions, and ideas other than their own. This trait also requires that they remember occasions when they were wrong, despite an intense conviction that they were right, and consider that they might be similarly deceived in a case at hand.

QURANIC CHAPTER 39: THE TROOPS (AL-ZUMAR)
SIGNS 39:71-39:75

Makkah: *Those who were ungrateful will be*
ones driven to hell in troops
until when they drew near it,
then, the doors of it will be flung open.
Ones who are its keepers will say to them:
Approach not Messengers from among you who recount to you
the signs of your Lord to warn you
of the meeting of this your Day?
They would say: Yea.
But the word of punishment was realized
against the ones who are ungrateful. (39:71)
It will be said: Enter the doors of hell

as ones who will dwell in it forever.
Miserable it will be as a place of lodging
for the ones who increase in pride. (39:72)
Those who were God-conscious will be ones driven to their Lord
in the Garden in troops until when they drew near it
and its doors were let loose,
ones who are its keepers will say to them:
Peace be on you! You fared well!
So enter it, ones who dwell in it forever. (39:73)
They would say: The Praise belongs to God
Who was sincere in His promise
to us and gave us the earth as inheritance
that we take our dwelling in the Garden wherever we will.
How excellent a compensation for the ones who work! (39:74)
And you will see the angels as ones who encircle
around the Throne glorifying their Lord with praise.
And it would be decided in Truth among them.
And it would be said: The Praise belongs to God,
the Lord of the worlds. (39:75)

COMMENTARY°

The angels keeping guard will receive them there with a statement that they deserve their lot, reminding them of the reasons why they have ended up there: its keepers will ask them: *Those who were ungrateful will be ones driven to hell in troops until when they drew near it, then, the doors of it will be flung open. Ones who are its keepers will say to them: Approach not Messengers from among you who recount to you the signs of your Lord to warn you of the meeting of this your Day? They would say: Yea. But the word of punishment was realized against the ones who are ungrateful.* (39:71) The position is one of submission, without any argument or dispute. They accept their lot and submit to their fate: *It will be said: Enter the doors of hell as ones who will dwell in it forever. Miserable it will be as a place of lodging for the ones who increase in pride.* (39:72)

Such is the fate of the arrogant party, destined for hell. How about the other party, the God-fearing who are destined for heaven? *Those who were God-conscious will be ones driven to their Lord in the Garden in troops until when they drew near it and its doors were let loose, ones who are its keepers will say to them: Peace be on you! You fared well! So enter it, ones who dwell in it forever.* (39:73)

At this point, the voices of the people of heaven are raised high in glorifying and praising God: *They would say: The Praise belongs*

to God Who was sincere in His promise to us. (39:74) This is the land worth inheriting. They live in it wherever they wish, taking from it whatever they want. *And gave us the earth as inheritance that we take our dwelling in the Garden wherever we will. How excellent a compensation for the ones who work!* (39:74)

The scene is given a finale that fills our hearts with awe and majesty. It too is in complete harmony with the ambience of the whole chapter devoted to the theme of God's Oneness. The entire universe is in complete submission to God Almighty, and praises of God are uttered by every living soul and all existence: *And you will see the angels as ones who encircle around the Throne glorifying their Lord with praise. And it would be decided in Truth among them. And it would be said: The Praise belongs to God, the Lord of the worlds.* (39:75)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions,** (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Did God prescribe mercy for Himself?
Can you describe a time when you found God's mercy?
How is the Quran a mercy to those who believe?
Who can best phrase this question?
Is there another way to put this question?
What is the advantage of putting the question this way?
How would you put the question?
We can ask questions about questions.

When have you enjoyed helping someone? When not? Why?
Did you help that person?
When is it hard to listen to what someone else has to say? Why?
Have you ever not wanted to share something? Should you have?
Why or why not? If you did not share, why did you not share?
Or: What were you thinking? Why?
Did you know you should not? Or: Did it seem okay at the time? Why?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I recognized that by defining something, I was giving it meaning.
I realized that once I defined something, the meaning then determined how I feel about it, how I act upon it and the implications it had.
I realized that there is often more than one way to define or give meaning to something.
I was able to turn the negatives into positives.
I was able to turn my mistakes into opportunities to learn.
I was able to make a list of five recurrent negative contexts in which I feel frustrated, angry, unhappy or worried.
I identified the definition/meaning in each case that was causing my negative emotions.
I was able to find a positive definition for each and then plan for my new responses as well as new emotions.

LESSON 60(1). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT BEING FAIR AND JUST (NOT SELF-SERVING OR EGOCENTRIC)

Developing fairness requires the willingness and consciousness of the need to entertain all viewpoints sympathetically and to assess them with the same moral traits, without reference to one's own feelings or vested interests, or the feelings or vested interests of one's friends, community, or nation. It implies adherence to moral traits without reference to one's own advantage or the advantage of one's group.

The fair and just Quranic critical thinkers work to improve their thinking whenever they can. They want things for themselves, but they aren't selfish. They want to help other people. They want to help make the world better for everyone. They are willing to give things up to help others (when it makes sense to). They don't always have the right answers, but they work to improve their thinking (and actions) over time.

Fairness and justice is a divine attribute and the Quran emphasizes that we should adopt it as a moral ideal. God commands people to be just towards one another: *Say: My Lord commanded me to justice* (7:29); *truly, God commands justice and kindness and giving to one who is a possessor of kinship and He prohibits depravity and ones who are unlawful and insolent. He admonishes you so that perhaps you will recollect.* (16:90); *and I was commanded to be just among you* (42:15), and, in judging between person and person, to judge justly: *And when you gave judgment between humanity, give judgment justly* (4:58) *for He loves those who judge justly.*

All believers stand firmly for justice even if it goes against themselves, their parents, their relatives, without any distinction of rich and poor: *Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God even against yourselves or the ones who are your parents or the nearest of kin, whether you would be rich or poor.* (4:135) God's revelation itself is an embodiment of truth and justice: *Completed was the Word of your Lord in sincerity and justice.* (6:115) It is revealed with the Balance (of right and wrong) so that people may stand forth for justice: *We caused the Book to descend with them and the Balance so that humanity may uphold equity.* (57:25)

The value of justice is absolute and morally binding and the believers are, therefore, warned that they should not let the hatred of some people lead them to transgress the limits of justice or make them depart from the ideal of justice, for justice is very near to piety and righteousness: *Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God and let not that you detest a folk drive you into not dealing justly. Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness.* (5:8)

Justice demands that people should be true in word and deed: *They are the ones who remain steadfast and the ones who are sincere and the ones who are morally obligated and the ones who spend in the way of God and the ones who ask for forgiveness at the breaking of day* (3:17) faithfully observe the

contracts which they have made and fulfill all obligations.

QURANIC CHAPTER 40: THE ONE WHO FORGIVES (AL-GHAFIR)

SIGNS 40:1-40:9

Makkah: *Ha Mim.* (40:1)
The sending down successively of this Book is from God,
The Almighty, The Knowing, (40:2)
The One Who Forgives impieties,
The One Who Accepts remorse,
The Severe in Repayment, The Possessor of Bounty.
There is no god but He. To Him is the Homecoming. (40:3)
No one disputes the signs of God, but those who were ungrateful.
So be you not disappointed
with their going to and fro in the land. (40:4)
The folk of Noah denied before them
and the confederates after them.
And every community is about to take its Messenger
and they dispute with falsehood to refute The Truth.
So I took them. And how had been My repayment! (40:5)
And, thus, was the Word of your Lord realized
against those who were ungrateful
that they will be the Companions of the Fire. (40:6)
Those who carry the Throne
and whoever is around it glorify the praises of their Lord
and believe in Him and ask for forgiveness
for those who believed:
Our Lord! You encompassed everything in mercy
and in knowledge.
So forgive those who repented
and followed Thy way
and guard them from the punishment of hellfire. (40:7)
Our Lord! And cause them to enter the Gardens of Eden
which You promised them
and whomever was in accord with morality among their fathers
and their spouses and their offspring.
Truly, Thou, Thou alone art The Almighty, The Wise. (40:8)
And guard them from the evil deeds.
And whomever Thou hast guarded
from the evil deeds on that Day.
Surely, You had had mercy on him.
And that, it is the winning the sublime triumph! (40:9)

COMMENTARY°

This is one of the seven chapters that all begin with the two separate letters, *Ha Mim*. This is followed by a statement of a fact that is frequently used in Makkan chapters given these seek to establish faith: the fact of revelation: *The sending down successively of this Book is from God, The Almighty, The Knowing.* (40:2) A number of God s attributes are then stated. These are directly relevant to the subject matter of the chapter and the issues it discusses: *The One Who Forgives impieties, The One Who Accepts remorse, The Severe in Repayment, The Possessor of Bounty. There is no god but He. To Him is the Homecoming.* (40:3) In fact all the issues the chapter raises relate to these attributes of God, powerfully stated at the outset to give an impression that they are well and firmly established.

Throughout the entire expanse of the universe, only the ungrateful stand apart, deviating from the true path. In relation to the whole universe, they are weaker and less significant than an ant in relation to planet earth. When they stand on their own disputing God's revelations and denying His signs, the rest of the universe declares its acceptance of Him and recognizes His Oneness, deriving its strength from Him. With their odd attitude, the ungrateful' fate is sealed, no matter how powerful, affluent and mighty they may appear to be: *No one disputes the signs of God, but those who were ungrateful. So be you not disappointed with their going to and fro in the land.* (40:4) They may be able to move about, gather wealth, enjoy their power and revel in easy living. However, they are ultimately doomed. The battle, if there could ever be a battle between them and the Creator of the universe, will lead to its inevitable end.

There were in former times communities that followed the same path. Their fate should make clear to the ungrateful what happens in the end to anyone who tries to stand against the power of the Almighty: *The folk of Noah denied before them and the confederates after them.* (40:5) In other words, the battle remains the same throughout all generations. This sign provides an overall picture: a message from God received with rejection and tyranny, which leads to the inevitable end. Every Messenger is met by those in power in his community who do not try to justify their stance with sound argument. On the contrary, they resort to tyranny and try to do away with God's Messenger. They also resort to trickery in order to deceive the masses and claim victory for themselves. Therefore, God's power intervenes and smashes them in the most amazing way: *And every community is about to take its Messenger and they dispute with falsehood to refute The Truth. So I took them. And how had been My re-*

payment! (40:5) The punishments meted out were indeed severe, leaving in their wake ruins that testify to the same. Furthermore, all this is recorded in human history.

The battle, however, is not over yet. There is a further episode in the life to come: *And, thus, was the Word of your Lord realized against those who were ungrateful that they will be the Companions of the Fire* (40:6) When God's word applies to someone, it always comes true. There can be no argument about this.

Those who bear the Throne and those around it extol their Lord's limitless glory and praise, and have faith in Him, and pray far the forgiveness of all believers.

We do not know what this throne is: we have no image of it. Nor do we know how those assigned to carry it do so or how the others are present around it. It is futile to try to determine something which is beyond the reach of human understanding or perception. No purpose can be served by arguing about something over which God has not provided information. All that can be said concerning this fact is that there are some creatures who are close to God, and these extol their Lords limitless glory and praise, and have faith in Him. Although the fact that they are believers can be taken for granted, this is specifically mentioned in the Quran to emphasize the bond between them and human believers. Having extolled Gods limitless glory, these servants of God pray for the believers among humanity, requesting the best that one believer can ask for another.

They begin their supplication in a very polite way, in the process teaching us how to couch our own prayers. As they address God, they make clear their request that God bestows His grace on people, that they are relying on the fact that His grace embraces all, and that His knowledge encompasses everything. Thus, they do not make any assumptions; they simply refer to God s grace and knowledge.*Those who carry the Throne and whoever is around it glorify the praises of their Lord and believe in Him and ask for forgiveness for those who believed: Our Lord! You had encompassed everything in mercy and in knowledge. So forgive those who repented and followed Your way and guard them from the punishment of hellfire.* (40:7) This reference to God's forgiveness and people s repentance corresponds to the opening of the chapter where God is described as the One who forgives sins and accepts repentance. Likewise, the reference to the 'suffering in the blazing fire corresponds to the earlier description of His retribution as being severe.

These servants of God continue with their supplications, praying now for the admission of believers among human beings into heaven,

in fulfilment of His promise to His good servants: *Our Lord! And cause them to enter the Gardens of Eden which **You** had promised them and whomever was in accord with morality among their fathers and their spouses and their offspring. Truly, **You**, **You** alone are The Almighty, The Wise.* (40:8) Admission into heaven is a great triumph and means a life of bliss. When there is added to this the company of God-conscious ancestors, spouses and offspring, another dimension of bliss is thus granted. Moreover, this is an aspect of the unity of all believers. It is in the bond of faith that fathers, spouses and offspring are united. Without it, all their ties are severed. This part of their supplication highlights God s attributes of power and wisdom. It is this combination that determines how people are judged.

The supplication continues: *And guard them from the evil deeds. And whomever **You** have guarded from the evil deeds on that Day. Surely, **You** had had mercy on him. And that, it is the winning the sublime triumph!* (40:9) Having prayed for their admission to heaven, this prayer refers to the most important point in the whole difficult process. It is evil deeds that ruin people and lead them to their doom. When God shields a believer from evil, He actually shields that believer from the consequences of such evil. This is the great mercy on the Day of Judgment, and it is only the first step to bliss and happiness. This shielding from evil is indeed the great triumph.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Clearly identify the assumptions the Quranic signs express and determine whether they show a sense of justice.
Consider how these assumptions are shaping your point of view.
Assumptions are beliefs you take for granted.
If this was the evidence, and this the conclusion, what was assumed?
Or: If this is what he saw (heard, etc.), and this is what he concluded?
Or thought, what did he assume?
Why do people assume this?
Have you ever made this assumption?
What could be assumed instead?

Is this belief true? Sometimes true? Seldom true? Always false? (give examples.)
Can you think of reasons for this belief? Against it?
What, if anything, can we conclude about this assumption?
What would we need to find out to be able to judge it?
How would someone who makes this assumption act?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I found that sometimes I am not fair-minded.
I was able to contrast the reasoning of a believer and an ungrateful person based on Quranic signs.
I gained insight into fair-mindedness and developing a sense of justice when I considered multiple points of view.

LESSON 60(2). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL STANDARD LOGIC (BEING REASONABLE)

Logic is a word that has many meanings and uses:

1) Correct reasoning or the study of correct reasoning and its foundations.
2) The relationships between propositions (supports, assumes, implies, contradicts, counts against, is relevant to).
3) The system of principles, concepts, and assumptions that are the basis for Quranic Studies.
4) Reasoning that bears upon the truth or justification of any belief or set of beliefs.
5) Reasoning that bears upon an answer to any question or set of questions.

The word logic relates to the question of explanation. As human thought and behavior is to some extent based on logic rather than instinct, we try to figure things out using ideas, meanings, and thought. Such intellectual behavior inevitably involves logic or considerations of a logical sort: some sense of what is relevant and irrelevant, of what supports and what counts against a belief, of what we should and should not assume, of what we should and should not claim, of what we do and do not know, of what is and is not implied, of what does and does not contradict, of what we should or should not do or believe.

Concepts have a logic in that we can investigate the conditions under which they do and do not apply, of what is relevant or irrelevant to them, of what they do or don't imply, etc. Questions have a logic in that we can investigate the conditions under which they can be settled. Quranic Studies has a logic in that the Quran has purposes and a set of logical structures that bear upon those purposes: assumptions, concepts, issues, data, theories, claims implications, consequences, etc.

The concept of logic also plays an essential role in critical thinking. Unfortunately, it takes a considerable length of time before most people become comfortable with its many uses. In part, this is due to people's failure to study their own thinking in keeping with the standards of reason and logic. This is not to deny, of course, that logic is involved in all human thinking. It is rather to say that the logic we use is often implicit, unexpressed, and sometimes contradictory.

According to the Quran to be logical is to be "reasonable" (*'aqala*), to use one's intellect (*'aql*). This course in Quranic Studies is to learn from Quranic logic. Events described in the Quran do not just happen. The sacred text's description of events make sense when you understand its meaning.

Questions should be asked with a method to them. Teachers should help students figure out the logic behind the sign (*ayah*) or signs (*ayat*). Their an-

swers should always reference particular Quranic signs. How they learn to support their answers by giving reasons and references to the sign(s) is important, not any specific answer that they give.

In many cases, Quranic learning has been through rote memorization and drills based on having memorized the signs. When students learn through this method, they are not logically informed as to what the Quranic signs are saying. They are learning only by association or rote memorization without connecting the revelation to how they think or how they chose to live their life. As a result, students learn to think of the Quranic text as something they simply memorize without ever understanding the meaning of what it says. In doing so, they do not integrate the meanings of the Quranic message into their lives, they do not "own" it. They rarely relate, that is, make relevant, what they have memorized to their own experience nor are they able to critique each by means of the other. They rarely try to test by making it a part of their everyday life. They rarely ask questions such as:

> Why is this so? How does this relate to what I already know?
> How does this relate to what I am learning in other classes?

With the method of memorization of the sacred text, very few students ever think that they need to implement what they are learning in their life nor have they learned how to do so.

The Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge mixed with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression (*al-tafaqquh fi 'l-din*), that is, "understands the religion." This means as a reasonable approach filled with curiosity to constructing a worldview of Islam. Islam, in other words, advises knowledge through analysis and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely rigid and authoritarian approach that teaches blind certainty and a closed-mindedness that results in an imprisonment of the mind so complete that the prisoner does not even know that his or her mind has been imprisoned. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions: Faith based on detailed analysis (*al-iman al-tafsilli*) as opposed to undigested and uncomprehended faith (*al-iman al-ijmali*). The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the clerics of all the leading schools of thought.[6]

QURANIC CHAPTER 40: THE ONE WHO FORGIVES (AL-GHAFIR)
SIGNS 40:10-40:20

Makkah: *It will be proclaimed*

to those who were ungrateful:
Certainly, the repugnance of God is greater
than your repugnance of yourselves
when you are called to belief, but you are ungrateful. (40:10)
They said: Our Lord!
***You** caused us to die two times*
*and **You** gave us life two times.*
We acknowledged our impieties.
Then, is there any way of going forth? (40:11)
It will be said: That is because
when God alone was called to, you disbelieved.
But when partners are ascribed with Him, you believe.
And the determination is with God alone,
The Lofty, The Great. (40:12)
It is He Who causes you to see His signs
and sends down provision for you from heaven.
And none recollect but whoever is penitent. (40:13)
So call you on God ones who are sincere
and devoted in the way of life to Him
although the ones who are ungrateful disliked it. (40:14)
Exalter of Degrees, Possessor of the Throne,
He casts the Spirit by His command
on whom He wills of His servants to warn
of the Day of the Encounter, (40:15)
a Day when they are ones who depart.
Nothing about them will be hidden from God.
Whose is the dominion this Day.
It is to God, The One, The Omniscient. (40:16)
On this Day every soul will be given recompense
for what it earned.
There will be no injustice today.
God is Swift in reckoning. (40:17)
And warn them of The Impending Day
when the hearts will be near the throats, ones who choke.
There will not be a loyal friend for ones who are unjust,
nor an intercessor be obeyed. (40:18)
He knows that which is the treachery of the eyes
and whatever the breasts conceal. (40:19)
And God decrees by The Truth.
And those whom they call to other than Him decide not anything.
Truly, God, He is The Hearing, The Seeing. (40:20)

COMMENTARY°

As the carriers of the throne and those surrounding it address their prayer to God appealing for His grace to be bestowed on believers, their brethren in faith, the ungrateful find themselves in a totally different capacity. Everyone is looking for support, but none is to be found. In fact all bonds with all beings and things in the universe are severed. They are called out so that they can listen to the rebuke coming from all directions. The arrogance they demonstrated in this life is turned now into humiliation. They want to place their hopes in someone, but none is available to encourage their hopes:

The ungrateful will be addressed: *It will be proclaimed to those who were ungrateful:Certainly, the repugnance of God is greater than your repugnance of yourselves when you are called to belief, but you are ungrateful.* (40:10)

The Arabic text uses the strongest word for hate. We see them addressed from all corners and told that God's loathing of them when they were called upon to believe and still rejected the faith is far stronger than their feelings of hate towards themselves as they realize to what end they have brought themselves. They realize how different their fate could have been, had they responded to the call to faith before it was too late. This reminder is exceptionally painful for them in their newly difficult situation.

Now that all delusion is gone, they realize that the only One to turn to is God Himself; and so they do: *They said: Our Lord! **You** had caused us to die two times and **You** had given us life two times. We acknowledged our impieties. Then, is there any way of going forth?* (40:11) Their words betray their misery and despair. Their appeal betrays the direness of their situation. They are in bitter despair. They are made to see the reason for their plight: *It will be said: That is because when God alone was called to, you disbelieved. But when partners are ascribed with Him, you believe. And the determination is with God alone, The Lofty, The Great.* (40:12) This is what has brought you to your present position of humiliation. You denied God's Oneness and attributed partners to Him. All judgment, then, rests with Him, the Exalted, the Supreme. Both attributes fit well with the position of judgment. He is Exalted above all things and Superior to all beings.

The chapter now dwells on one of God's attributes that fits with His exalted position. The believers are instructed to address their formal prayers to Him, associating no partners with Him and to be sincere in their devotion to Him alone. The chapter also refers to the fact of revelation so as to give a warning about the day when all hu-

manity will be brought together for judgment, reward and punishment. On that day, all dominion and sovereignty belong to God alone.

Of all the sustenance: *It is He Who causes you to see His signs and sends down provision for you from heaven. And none recollect but whoever is penitent.* (40:13) God sends down people know best the rain, which is the origin of life on earth and the source of food and drink. Yet there is so much more than rain that God sends down and people learn about this gradually. Part of it consists of the rays that are necessary for life on earth. Such sustenance may also include the Divine messages that have provided guidance for humanity ever since the early stages of human life on earth. They showed us the right way and provided sound codes for living.

It is the one who turns to God that remembers His grace as well as His signs and revelations which the ungrateful, with hardened hearts, prefer to ignore. In connection with turning to God, the believers are instructed to pray to God alone and to be sincere in their faith, paying little heed to what the ungrateful feel or say: *So call you on God ones who are sincere and devoted in the way of life to Him although the ones who are ungrateful disliked it.* (40:14) The ungrateful will never accept that the believers should hold on sincerely to their faith in God alone and their worship of none but Him. There is no way they will accept this, no matter how much the believers try to appease them. Therefore, the believers should stay their course, praying to God alone, completely sincere and devoted. They should pay no heed to whether the ungrateful are happy with them or not, because they will never be satisfied.

The chapter adds at this point the following attributes of God: (40:15) It is God alone who is exalted in His position, high above all orders of being, the Lord of the Throne who controls everything. It is He who gives His orders, which give life to hearts and souls, to those whom He chooses from among His servants. This expression refers to the revelation of the Divine message, and it highlights here the fact that God's revelations bring life to humanity. It further states that revelation is bestowed from on high to those chosen elite among God's servants. All these facts are in harmony with God's attributes mentioned earlier in the chapter, stating that He is the Exalted, the Supreme One. (40:12)

The main task undertaken by a servant of God chosen to receive such a message is to deliver a warning: *Exalter of Degrees, Possessor of the Throne, He casts the Spirit by His command on whom He wills of His servants to warn of the Day of the Encounter,* (40:15) That is the day when people will meet together, and they will also stand face

to face with the deeds they did during their lives on earth, and they will meet other creatures such as the jinn, the angels and other types of God's creation. All of them will meet their Lord at the time of reckoning. Hence the day is described as 'the day of the meeting'. Furthermore, it is the day when they all stand without any cover to screen their reality. Hence, no one can put up a false image: *Nothing about them will be hidden from God. Whose is the dominion this Day. It is to God, The One, The Omniscient.* (40:16) In fact, nothing about them is concealed from God at any time. However, at all times other than that day, they may imagine that they are covered or screened by something or other, or that what they do or say may remain secret. On that day, however, they will be truly exposed, unable to enjoy even an imaginary cover.

Therefore, on that day the arrogant and the mighty are made to face their humble reality. The whole universe stands in awe, and all creatures demonstrate their submission. Sovereignty belongs completely to God, the One who overpowers all. In fact this is true at all times. However, on that day, this fact becomes clear to all and sundry. Every tyrant of old and every conceited person will come to know and feel it. Then every sound dies down and every movement stops. A majestic voice asks a question and replies to it, as there is no one else to ask or reply: *Whose is the dominion this Day. It is to God, The One, The Omniscient.* (40:16)

An air of awe, heightened by silence spreads. *On this Day every soul will be given recompense for what it earned. There will be no injustice today. God is Swift in reckoning.* (40:17) All creatures listen and realize; everything is settled, the reckoning is over. This is in harmony with what the chapter said at the outset about those who dispute God's revelations: *No one disputes the signs of God, but those who were ungrateful. So be you not disappointed with their going to and fro in the land.* (40:4) This is the end of unjustified arrogance, tyranny and injustice, as well as of wealth and affluence.

The section instructs the Prophet to warn his people about this day. The instruction is given against a backdrop of an image of the Day of Resurrection when God sits alone for judgment. Up till now the chapter has not addressed people directly; instead it used a reporting style: (40:18-40:20)

The section describes the Day of Judgment as ever drawing near, and we perceive it to be hastening towards us. Souls are in distress, pressing against peoples throats. They try to suppress their worries and fears, and the effort is difficult. Nevertheless, they can find no one to support or protect them. No one can put up a word of inter-

cession that finds response from anyone.

They stand in full view; nothing can conceal their reality. Even a stealthy glance and a hearts secret is brought into the open: *He knows that which is the treachery of the eyes and whatever the breasts conceal.* (40:19) An eye looking stealthily will try hard to conceal its stealthy gaze, but God is well aware of it. A secret may be hidden safely in one's soul, but it is not hidden from God who knows it all.

On that day, it is God only who passes judgment in fairness. Their alleged deities have nothing to do with such judgment: *And God decrees by The Truth. And those whom they call to other than Him decide not anything.* (40:20) His judgment is based on perfect knowledge and full awareness. He will not entertain any injustice for anyone, and He forgets nothing: *Truly, God, He is The Hearing, The Seeing.* (40:20)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What does it mean to be a monotheist?
What does it mean to be reasonable?
How would explain these signs to someone else?
Does what you say follow from the evidence that the signs give?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to relate the content of the above signs to practical situations in my life.

I knew that I had connected the Quranic message when I was able to tell someone in my own words what this sign says.

Lesson 60(3). Critical Thinking Intellectual Standard Definitive (to be precise)

Definitive means to be conclusive, final, ultimate, precise: (*muhkama*). Definitive indicates that something is exact and accurate. It is an important aspect of Quranic critical thinking. It is part of strategies such as clarifying issues, conclusions, or beliefs and clarifying and analyzing the meanings of words and phrases. Not only is definitive a standard to be used when analyzing the Quranic message, but in expressing the Quranic message as well. That is, precision of expression is implied in the above strategies and forms an important part of reasoned dialogue and dialectic.

Quranic Chapter 40: The One Who Forgives (al-Ghafir)

Signs 40:21-40:27

Section 3 (40:21): Journey Through the Earth

Makkah: *Journey they not through the earth*
and look on how had been
the Ultimate End of those who had been before them?
They, they had been superior to them in strength
and in traces they left on the earth,
but God took them for their impieties
and there had not been for them
one who is a defender from God. (40:21)
That had been because their Messengers approached them before
with the clear portents but they were ungrateful so God took them.
Truly, He is Strong, Severe in Repayment.(40:22)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (40:23)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (40:24)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (40:25)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (40:26)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (40:27)

Commentary°

Have they, then, never traveled through the land and beheld what happened in the end to those who lived before them? Greater were they in power than they are, and in the impact which they left on earth. God, however, took them to task for their sins, and they had none to defend them against God. That was because their messengers came to them with all the evidence of the truth, yet they rejected it. So God took them to task. He is Powerful, Stern in retribution. (40:21)

Quranic Chapter 40: The One Who Forgives (al-Ghafir)
Signs 40:28-40:37

Makkah: Book 27: Moses (40:28)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (40:29)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad and Salih and the People of Thamud ((40:30)
Makkah: Book 25: The People of Noah, Hud and the People of Aad and Salih and the People of Thamud (40:31)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad and Salih and the People of Thamud (40:32)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad and Salih and the People of Thamud (40:33)
Makkah: Book 26: Joseph (40:34)
Book 27: Moses, Pharaoh and Haman (40:35)
Book 27: Moses, Pharaoh and Haman (40:36)
Book 27: Moses, Pharaoh and Haman (40:37)

Quranic Chapter 40: The One Who Forgives (al-Ghafir)
Signs 40:38-40:50

Makkah: Book 27: Moses (40:38)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (40:39)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (40:40)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (40:41)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (40:42)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (40:43)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (40:44)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (40:45)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (40:46)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (40:47)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (40:48)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (40:49)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (40:50)

Lesson 60(4). Critical Thinking Intellectual Standard Connecting Complexities and Interrelationships

To connect complexities and interrelationships is an intellectual standard for critical thinking. This relates to the complexities and interrelationships between and among the Quranic verses. They require you to think beneath the surface of what the section or sign is saying. Exploring the Quranic message in the classroom depends on the quality of commitment of you and your classmates to develop your ability to discern the depth of what you are studying.

Quranic Chapter 40: The One Who Forgives (al-Ghafir)

Signs 40:51-40:60

Makkah: *Truly, We will, certainly,*
help Our Messengers
and those who believed in this present life
and on a Day when the ones who bear witness
will stand up, (40:51)
a Day when their excuses will not profit the ones who are unjust.
And for them will be the curse
and for them will be an evil abode. (40:52)
And, certainly, We gave Moses the guidance
and We gave as inheritance
to the Children of Israel the Book (40:53)
as a guidance and a reminder
for those imbued with intuition. (40:54)
So have you patience. Truly, the promise of God is true.
And ask for forgiveness for your impiety.
And glorify your Lord with praise
in the evening and the early morning. (40:55)
Madinah (40:56)
Madinah (40:57)
Makkah: *Not on the same level are the unwilling to see*
and the seeing nor those who believed
and did as the ones in accord with morality
and the ones who are evil doers.
Little do they recollect. (40:58)
Truly, the Hour is that which arrives.
There is no doubt about it,
yet most of humanity believes not. (40:59)
And your Lord said: Call to Me; I will respond to you.
Truly, those who grow arrogant toward My worship,

they will enter hell as ones who are in a state of lowliness. (40:60)

COMMENTARY°

The section adds a comment on the whole episode and what preceded it of reference to the different communities which suffered Gods punishment after taking a negative attitude towards His message. (40:51-40:55)

This definitive comment suits the decisive situation. We have been given an example of the end of truth and falsehood, both in this world and in the life to come. We have seen what fate befell Pharaoh and his noblemen in this life, and we have seen them disputing in hell, utterly humiliated. Such is the end of these communities, as stated in the Quran: (40:51-40:52)

As for the life to come, perhaps no believer in life after death will argue about this. They do not find any reason to argue. As for victory in this present world, this may need some explanation.

God's promise is clear and definitive: *Truly, We will, certainly, help Our Messengers and those who believed in this present life and on a Day when the ones who bear witness will stand up.* (40:51) Yet we see that some messengers were killed, and some had to abandon their homes after being rejected and driven out. Some believers have also been exposed to grievous suffering; some were thrown into the fire pit; some fell martyrs; some live in exceedingly difficult circumstances. What happens, then, to God's promise of support being given to them in this present life? Satan tries hard to exploit this situation, working hard to shake people's faith.

As for those who dispute God's revelations, with no authority granted to them, there is nothing in their hearts but a quest for a greatness they will never attain. Seek, then, refuge with God, for He is the One who hears all and sees all. The creation of the heavens and the earth is indeed greater than the creation of man; yet most people do not understand. The blind and the seeing are not equal; nor can those who believe and do good works and those who do evil be deemed equal. How seldom you reflect. The Last Hour is sure to come: of this there is no doubt. Yet most people will not believe. Your Lord says: (40:56-40:60)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evi-

dence and experiences) in order to answer questions, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

How to Build Your Argument from a few main ideas. State where you are going and what you will prove.

Know your audience: where are they coming from?
Cover mutual ground as a starting point.
Use familiar vocabulary to begin; introduce and define new concepts gradually.
Adapt the presentation's goals with the interests of your audience.
Treat each audience as a unique group.
Convince them with facts and logic.
Demonstrate that you know what you are talking about, but on their level!
Review and summarize in your conclusion.
Summarize what you've told them.
Check for comprehension.
Leave time for questions and discussion.
Follow up with options so audience can contact you.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I thought about the depth of interrelationships as expressed in this sign between God, the Messenger and the believers.
I was able to explain the main points of the sign to another student.
I now know the three points of who are my protectors/friends/allies.

LESSON 60(5). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL STANDARD APPROPRIATENESS (TO MAKE RELEVANT)

Appropriate means bearing upon or relating to the matter at hand, that is understanding the Quranic message. It implies a close logical relationship with, and importance to, what the Quran is revealing. Its relevance and validity of information helps in structuring problems and solving them. The appropriateness of the Quran's message has been clear for over 1400 years as it is the model which the believers follow.

It is not the effort that you put into this Quranic Studies that is evaluated, but the quality of your learning. Quranic appropriateness connects to its teaching you how to think. Once you have assessed the issues, concepts and information relevant to the particular sign or signs, your thinking will be focused on the task, question or problem related from the sign or signs.

The Quranic message conforms to the principles of good reasoning. It is sensible and teaches good judgment through its consistent, logical, complete, relevant and appropriate arguments on issues that are important to human life. Being sensitive with an ability to judge appropriateness is only developed with continuous practice, practice in distinguishing the relevant from the irrelevant, by evaluating what is appropriate and by arguing for and against the appropriateness of facts.

QURANIC CHAPTER 40: THE ONE WHO FORGIVES (AL-GHAFIR)

SIGNS 40:61-40:68

Makkah: *God is He Who made for you the nighttime*
so that you may rest in it and the daytime
for one who perceives.
Truly, God is Possessor of Grace to humanity,
but most of humanity gives not thanks. (40:61)
That is God, your Lord, the One Who is Creator of everything.
There is no god but He. Then, how you are misled! (40:62)
Thus, are misled those who had been
negating the signs of God. (40:63)
God is He Who made the earth for you as a stopping place
and the heaven as a canopy.
And He formed you and formed you well
and He provided you of what is good.
That is God, your Lord.
Then, blessed be God, the Lord of the worlds! (40:64)
He is The Living! There is no god but He!
So call to Him, ones sincere and devoted in the way of life to Him.

The Praise belongs to God, the Lord of the worlds! (40:65)
Say: Truly, I was prohibited from worshipping
those whom you call to other than God,
because the clear portents drew near me from my Lord.
And I was commanded to submit to the Lord of the worlds. (40:66)
He it is Who created you from earth dust,
again, from seminal fluid, again, from a clot.
Again, He brings you out as infant children.
Again, you come of age and are fully grown.
Again, you be an old man.
And of you is he whom death calls to itself before,
and that you reach a term, that which is determined
so that perhaps you will be reasonable. (40:47)
He it is Who gives life and causes to die.
And when He decreed an affair,
He only says to it: Be! Then, it is! (40:68)

COMMENTARY°

Let us now briefly discuss the text itself: *God is He Who made for you the nighttime so that you may rest in it and the daytime for one who perceives. Truly, God is Possessor of Grace to humanity, but most of humanity gives not thanks.* (40:61) Rest at night is necessary for every living thing. A period of darkness is needed so that living cells can rest before resuming their activity during the day. Sleeping is not enough to afford the needed rest; darkness is also necessary. A living cell that is exposed to light continuously reaches a degree of fatigue that ruins its structure.

These two phenomena of night and day are brought into existence by the One who alone deserves to be named God: *That is God, your Lord, the One Who is Creator of everything. There is no god but He. Then, how you are misled!* (40:62) People do recognize God's hand in everything, and they know for certain that He is the Creator of all. Such knowledge, in fact, forces itself on our minds by the very existence of things. No one can claim to have created these, and it is impossible that they could have come into existence of their own accord. It is most amazing then that people should turn away from believing in God:*Thus, are misled those who had been negating the signs of God.* (40:63)

The chapter then mentions the universal design that gives the earth and the sky their respective functions: *He provided you of what is good.* (40:64) The earth is a place suited for mans life, considering the many balances operating in it, some of which we have briefly discussed. The sky is a structure with careful proportions, dimensions

and cycles to ensure stability and the continuity of human life. Indeed human life is taken into consideration in the design of the universe itself.

Furthermore, the chapter specifies a link between the structure of the heavens and earth on the one hand and man's constitution and the wholesome provisions made for him on the other: *That is God, your Lord.* (40:64) These blessings and provisions are followed by a comment similar to the earlier one: *Then, blessed be God, the Lord of the worlds!* (40:64) He is the One who creates, measures and designs, giving you a specified place in His kingdom. He is your Lord, so glorify Him. His bounty encompasses all worlds.

His life is from Himself, neither gained nor created, without a beginning or an end. It does not alter, change or finish. Nothing else has such qualities to its life. All glory to Him; unique is His life.

Again He alone is God. The One who has a unique life is God: *He is the Living! There is no god but He! So call to Him ones sincere and devoted in the way of life to Him. The Praise belongs to God, the Lord of the worlds!* (40:65)

The Prophet is given clear instructions to declare to his people that he has been forbidden to worship what they invoke other than God. He has also been commanded to submit himself to the Lord of all the worlds: *Say: Truly I was prohibited from worshipping those whom you call to other than God, because the clear portents have drawn near me from my Lord. And I was commanded to submit to the Lord of the worlds.* (40:66)

It is He who creates you out of dust, then out of a gamete, then out of a clinging cell mass; and then He brings you forth as infants. He then lets you reach maturity, and then grow old—although some of you die earlier. [All this He ordains] so that you may reach your appointed term, and you may use your reason. It is He who ordains life and death. When He wills something to be, He only says to it, 'Be', and it is.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What factors make the interrelationship among believers a difficult problem in terms of being part of a community?
What are some of the complexities of this question?
Is this question simple or complex?
Is it easy or difficult to answer well and truly?
What makes this a complex question?
How are we dealing with the complexities inherent in the question?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to explain the main points of the signs to another student.

Lesson 60(6). Critical Thinking Intellectual Standard Worthiness (focusing on the significant, important)

Sufficiently great or import to be worthy of attention.

Quranic Chapter 40: The One Who Forgives (al-Ghafir)

Signs 40:69-40:78

Makkah: *Have you not considered*
those who dispute about the signs of God,
where they are turned away: (40:69)
Those who denied the Book
and that with which We sent Our Messengers?
Then, they will know. (40:70)
When yokes are on their necks
and the chains, they will be dragged (40:71)
into scalding water.
Again, they will be poured forth into the fire as fuel. (40:72)
Again, it will be said to them:
Where are what you had been ascribing as partners (40:73)
other than God?
They would say: They went astray from us.
Nay! We be not calling to anything before.
Thus, God causes to go astray ones who are ungrateful. (40:74)
That was because you had been exultant
on the earth without right and that you had been glad. (40:75)
Enter the doors of hell
as ones who will dwell in it forever.
Then, miserable it will be as a place of lodging
for the ones who increase in pride! (40:76)
So have you patience.
Truly, the promise of God is true.
And whether We cause you to see some part
of what We promise them or We call you to Us,
then, it is to Us they will be returned. (40:77)
And, certainly, We sent Messengers before thee
among whom We related to thee
and of whom We relate not to thee.
And it had not been for any Messenger
that he bring a sign, except with the permission of God.
So when the command of God drew near,
the matter would be decided rightfully.

And lost here are these, the ones who deal in falsehood. (40:78)

COMMENTARY°

These signs first wonder at those disputing God's revelations when they see the great signs He has placed in the universe. This serves as a prelude to outlining the fate that awaits them in the life to come. *Have you not considered those who dispute about the signs of God, where they are turned away: Those who denied the Book and that with which We sent Our Messengers? Then, they will know.* (40:69-40:70) They have rejected one book and one messenger, but, in fact, they reject everything all God's messengers said. Theirs is the same faith, put in its most perfect form in the final message. This means that they actually denied every single message and rejected every single messenger. Everyone who opposed the Divine faith, at any time in history including the present, did this when he or she opposed the truth advocated by the messenger addressing him personally.

This statement adds humiliation to painful punishment. *When yokes are on their necks and the chains, they will be dragged.* (40:71) They are dragged like animals and beasts to add further humiliation to their predicament. Why should they be given honorable treatment when they have discarded every single cause of honor? There they are tied up after the place is filled with a burning fire and scalding water.

Such is the end they face. It is then that they are further rebuked and painfully embarrassed: *Again, it will be said to them: Where are what you had been ascribing as partners other than God?* (40:73) Their reply is that of someone who is in total sorrow after he realizes that he has been badly deceived: *They would say: They went astray from us. Nay! We be not calling to anything before.* (40:74) We have lost them and we have no way of finding them. Nor can they find us. In fact we did not ascribe divinity to anyone. These were all myths and false presumptions. After this sorrowful answer, the chapter adds a general comment: *Thus, God causes to go astray ones who are ungrateful.* (40:74)

A further and final reproach is then added: *That was because you had been exultant on the earth without right and that you had been glad. Enter the doors of hell as ones who will dwell in it forever. Then, miserable it will be as a place of lodging for the ones who increase in pride!* (40:75-40:76) God save us! What, then, was all that dragging, the chains, the scalding waters and fire? It appears that these were a prelude before entering hell where they would abide. It

was because of their arrogance that they were so humiliated.

Again, the chapter urges the Prophet to remain patient in the face of the many levelled adversity he was encountering, represented in the arrogance shown by the ungrateful and their persistent disputing of God's revelations. He is told to have complete trust in the fulfilment of God s promise, whether God keeps him alive to see with his own eyes some aspects of what He warned the ungrateful against or He gathers him to Himself first. The whole question is determined by God. God's messenger's task is to deliver his message. Ultimately, all will return to God: *So have **you** patience. Truly, the promise of God is true. And whether We cause **you** to see some pare of what We promise them or We call you to Us, then, it is to Us they will be returned.* (40:77)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Stage 1

- Develop a statement of the topic
- List what you understand, what you've been told and what opinions you hold about it
- Identify resources available for research
- Define timelines and due dates and how they affect the development of your study
- Print the list as your reference

Stage 2

- Define your destination, what you want to learn
- Clarify or verify with your teacher or an "expert" on your subject
- Develop your frame of reference, your starting point, by listing what you already know about the subject

What opinions and prejudices do you already have about this?
What have you been told, or read about, this topic?
What resources are available to you for research

When gathering information, keep an open mind
Look for chance resources that pop up!
Play the "reporter" and follow leads
If you don't seem to find what you need, ask librarians or your teacher.
How does your timeline and due dates affect your research?

Stage 3
Keep in mind that you need to follow a schedule.
- Work back from the due date and define stages of development, not just with this first phase, but in completing the whole project.

Summary of Critical Thinking:
1. Determine the facts of a new situation or subject without prejudice
2. Place these facts and information in a pattern so that you can understand them
3. Accept or reject the source values and conclusions based upon your experience, judgment, and beliefs

- Develop a statement of the topic.
- List what you understand, what you've been told and what opinions you hold about it.
- Identify resources available for research.
- Define timelines and due dates and how they affect the development of your study.
- Print the list as your reference.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I am frequently able to explain these signs to someone.
I know that if I cannot explain these sign to someone else, it shows that I have not learned them well enough.

LESSON 60(7). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
MAKING PLAUSIBLE INFERENCES OR INTERPRETATIONS

Observation and information are the basis for sound conclusions. You learn to distinguish between what you observe from the Quranic signs and what you conclude. You delve into the facts given in the signs to find the implications as well as the concepts. You separate guessing from clear conclusions. You normally have a tendency to make inferences that reinforce your own egocentric or sociocentric world views. You learn to evaluate inferences that are made when your own desires are involved from inferences that develop sound conclusions. You should know that every interpretation that is made is based on inference and that you interpret every situation in which you find yourselves.

The Middle Community, Moderation (*ummatan wasatan, wasatiyyah*). The Quranic conception of the Middle Community visualizes a certain degree of parity between dialogic and co-related concepts such as reason and revelation, matter and spirit, rights and duties, individualism and society, compulsion and voluntarism, text and *ijtihad*, ideal and reality, continuity and change, and between the past realities and future prospects. How does *wasatiyyah* manifest itself and achieve its desire purposes of equilibrium and moderation?

QURANIC CHAPTER 40: THE ONE WHO FORGIVES (AL-GHAFIR)
SIGNS 40:79-40:85

Makkah: *God is He Who has made for you flocks*
among which you may ride on them
and among which you eat of them. (40:79)
And you have what profits from them
and that with them you reach the satisfaction
of a need that is in your breasts
and you are carried on them and on boats. (40:80)
And He causes you to see His signs.
So which of the signs of God do you reject? (40:81)
Journey they not through the earth
and look on how had been the Ultimate End of those before them?
They had been more than them
and were more vigorous in strength
and in regard to the traces they left on the earth.
Then, availed them not what they had been earning. (40:82)
Then, when their Messengers drew near them
with the clear portents,
they were glad in the knowledge

that they had and surrounded them was
what they had been ridiculing. (40:83
So when they saw Our might, they said:
We believed in God alone
and we were ungrateful in that we had been
ones who are polytheists. (40:84)
But their belief be not what profits them once they saw Our might.
This is a custom of God which was, surely,
in force among His servants.
And lost here are the ones who are ungrateful. (40:85)

COMMENTARY°

The section concludes on a very powerful note. (40:82-40:85) At this point the chapter questions them, encouraging them to travel across the land with open eyes, alert feelings and an objective approach. They should look at what took place on earth before their time, and consider whether they too might be exposed to the same: (40:82) Before specifying what end they met, the chapter describes the conditions of those past communities so that the addressees can consider how it could affect them and also enable them to draw the right lessons:(40:82) Thus, they enjoyed power and civilization. Some of these belonged to generations that preceded the Arabs, the history of some is given to the Prophet, while others were known to the Arabs who passed by their ruins: (40:82)

Neither material power nor numerical strength was of any avail to them. Indeed their advancement was the cause of their tragedy: (40:83)

Those people, however, revelled in what little knowledge they had and ridiculed whoever reminded them of what is beyond their knowledge: (40:83) Therefore, when they see Gods might, they begin to realize the truth of their arrogance and acknowledge what they used to deny. They declare their belief in God's Oneness and disown those deities which they alleged to be God's partners. All this, however, comes when it is too late: (40:84-40:85) It is a rule God has established that repentance after demonstrating God s might is not acceptable, because it is motivated by fear, not by faith. (40:85) God's way remains operative at all times. It never changes, deviates or fails: (40:85)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based

on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What facts are relevant to this issue?
What facts must we consider in deciding this issue?
What information do we need?
Do you mean that your classmate is assuming that ...?
The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are. . . ?
Figure out all significant ideas needed to understand and answer your question.
You may need to analyze these concepts. Use a good dictionary.
My inferences or conclusions are based on Quranic concepts and theories.
What is the most basic concept in my question?
What Quranic terms have I learned?
What are the key concepts (definitions) of the Quranic message in this section?
What ideas or principles does the Quranic message clarify?
What theories does the Quranic message present?
What Idea am I using in my thinking?
Is this idea causing problems for me or for others?
I think this is a good theory, but could you explain it more fully?
What is the main hypothesis you are using in your reasoning?
Are you using this term in keeping with established usage?
What main distinctions should we draw in reasoning through this problem?
What idea is this author using in his or her thinking?
Is there a problem with it?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I know that I cannot interpret information without ideas or concepts, or some way to give meaning.
I am able to find the key idea, the central concept of the signs.
I know the subject of the concept and its vocabulary.

Lesson 61(1). Critical Thinking Intellectual Standard Numerous or Multiple Viewpoints

In terms of critical thinking, numerous as an intellectual standard means involving multiple viewpoints. In the Quranic context, there are the many viewpoints presented: those of the ones who are believers, the ones who are ungrateful, the ones who are doers of good, the ones who are wrongdoers, and so forth.

The Quran presents multiple viewpoints and indicates a wide-ranging and broad-minded perspective. Its reasoning is clear, accurate precise, relevant and deep along with a breadth of multiple points of view. Thinking in terms of multiple viewpoints requires insightful thinking.

Quranic Chapter 41: They Were Explained Distinctly (al-Fussilat) Signs 41:1-41:8

Makkah: *Ha Mim.* (41:1)
A sending down successively
from The Merciful, The Compassionate, (41:2)
a Book in which its signs were explained distinctly,
an Arabic Recitation for a folk who know, (41:3)
a bearer of glad tidings and a warner,
but most of them turned aside so they hear not. (41:4)
And they said: Our hearts are sheathed
from that to which you call us
and in our ears is a heaviness and between us
and between you is a partition.
So work. Truly, we, too, are ones who work. (41:5)
Say: I am only a mortal like you.
It is revealed to me that your God is God, One;
so go straight to Him and ask for forgiveness from Him,
and woe to the ones who are idolaters—
those who give not the purifying alms (41:6)
and who in the world to come are ones who disbelieve. (41:7)
Truly, those who believed and did
as the ones in accord with morality,
for them will be compensation, that which is unfailing. (41:8)

Commentary°

It is as if the two letters with which the chapter starts, *Ha, Mim*, are a name given to the chapter or to the Quran. The two letters constitute the subject of the first sentence while the predicate forms the

next sign: *Ha Mim. A sending down successively from The Merciful, The Compassionate.* (41:1-41:2) Choosing to identify the divine attributes of grace and mercy in connection with the revelation of the Quran highlights the quality that is most characteristic of this revelation, namely divine mercy. There is no doubt that the revelation of the Quran is an act of mercy for all of humanity. It is a mercy for those who believe in it and implement it as also for other creatures, not merely humans. The Quran defines a code of living that brings good results for all. It has had a profound impact on the life of humanity, its concepts, values and course of action. Its impact is universal and consistent, ever since it was revealed. Those who study human history with true objectivity, following its course in its wider perspective, which includes all facets of human activity, are able to recognize this truth. Many of them have also recorded this in clear terms. *A Book in which its signs were explained distinctly, an Arabic Recitation for a folk who know,* (41:3)

Spelling out the signs, clearly and distinctly, according to purpose, people's nature and mentality, generations, communities, psychologies and needs is a major characteristic of the Quran. Its signs are indeed clearly expounded for people who are ready to learn and receive knowledge. In this way the Quran gives good news to believers who put their faith in practice, and delivers warnings to those who reject its message and entertain evil. It also explains why such good news and warnings have been given in a fine Arabic style to Arabic-speaking people. *A bearer of glad tidings and a warner, but most of them turned aside so they hear not.*(41:4)

This is indeed what they did, turning away so as not to hear or be exposed to the powerful logic of the Quran. As the chapter later informs us, they tried hard to persuade others not to listen to the Quran. Of those that did listen their attitude was the same as those who did not: they all resisted the influence of the Quran on their hearts. Thus they were like the deaf, deprived of their hearing faculty. *And they said: Our hearts are sheathed from that to which you have called us and in our ears is a heaviness and between us and between you is a partition. So work. Truly, we, too, are ones who work.* (41:5)

This is just one example of what the first advocate of the Quranic message had to face. Yet, still he continued to call on people to accept his message, allowing no element of despair to creep into or disrupt his work. He never hastened the fulfillment of God's promise to him or the infliction of punishment on those who denied him. He acted instead upon instruction, declaring to people that putting the warnings into action was not up to him. He was no more than a human

being receiving revelations and delivering a message. His task was to call on people to believe in God's Oneness and to adhere to His message. He was also mandated to warn the idolaters. Once he had done this, matters were left to God while he himself had no say in what was bound to happen: *Say: I am only a mortal like you. It is revealed to me that your God is God, One; so go straight to Him and ask for forgiveness from Him, and woe to the ones who are polytheists—those who give not the purifying alms.* (41:6)

What perseverance! What endurance and what dedication! Only a person who has experienced at first hand something of this condition can appreciate the power and resilience required to persevere against such odds. Yet this perseverance is coupled with the realization that one has no say in what turn developments take. Yet the Prophet faced such unrelenting opposition, arrogance and carelessness, without ever requesting a miracle to silence his opponents.

In order to be able to face such situations, God's Prophets and Messengers were often directed to remain patient in adversity. Advocacy of the divine message can only take the road of long patience and perseverance. The first thing that requires such patience is the advocate s keen desire to see the divine message triumph, but then realize that such triumph is slow coming. Indeed, no sign of it may appear for a long time, yet those who undertake such advocacy must accept this willingly and without hesitation.

The maximum the Messenger could do in the face of such arrogant rejection and ridicule of his message was to say: *and who in the world to come are ones who disbelieve.* (41:7) The fact that *zakat*, or the obligatory charity, is specified here must have been in response to a certain situation, which we cannot now determine. This sign was revealed in Makkah, while purifying alms (*zakat*) was only imposed as a duty in the second year after the Messenger's migration to Madinah. The overall requirement of *zakat* was known about during the Makkan period, but only as a general requirement whereby people paid as they wished. Later, in Madinah, this was modified to make it a specific duty with defined rates on different types of property. To disbelieve in the life to come is the essence of rejection of the divine message, and it should be met with stern warnings. Some scholars argue that in this particular instance, *zakat* means purity of faith. The general tone of the chapter and the circumstances prevailing at the time admit this possibility. *Truly, those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality, for them will be compensation, that which is unfailing.* (41:8)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

- Define vocabulary and practice its use in discussion
- Relate terms to common experiences or general usage
- Be mindful of engaging the entire class
- Build a chain of contribution, responses, reactions, alternatives, divergence, etc.
- Randomize questioning in order to keep all students engaged
- Create a non-judgmental environment
- Build confidence and logic
- Keep a conversational tone
- Direct "big picture" questions to holistic learners; detail questions to sequential learners

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I considered class time as a time in which I practiced thinking (within the subject) using the fundamental concepts and principles of the course.

I did not sit back passively, waiting for knowledge to fall into my head.

Lesson 61(2). Critical Thinking Intellectual Standard Right Judgment

The condition or quality of being true, correct, or exact; freedom from error or defect; precision or exactness; correctness; faithful representation of the truth.

Quranic Chapter 41: They Were Explained Distinctly (al-Fussilat) Signs 41:9-41:18

Makkah: *Say: Truly, are you ungrateful to Him*
Who created the earth in two days?
And assign you to Him rivals?
That is the Lord of the worlds! (41:9)
And He made on it firm mountains from above it
and He blessed it and ordained its subsistence
within it in four days
equally for the ones who ask. (41:10)
Again, He turned His attention
to the heaven while it was smoke
and He said to it and to the earth:
Approach both of you willing or unwilling.
They both said: We approached
as ones who are obedient. (41:11)
Then, foreordaining seven heavens in two days,
He revealed in each heaven its command.
We made the present heaven appear pleasing with lamps
and keeping them safe.
Thus, decreed the Almighty, The Knowing. (41:12)
But if they turned aside, then, say:
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad and Salih and the People of Thamud (41:13)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (41:14)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (41:15)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad ((41:16)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (41:17)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad and Salih and the People of Thamud (41:18)

Commentary°

Creation of the Earth

Continuing to advocate the divine message, the Messenger puts

before them the enormity of the offense they commit by associating partners with God and rejecting His message. He points first to the universe, in relation to which they are tiny and flimsy creatures. He shows them God's power as reflected in the nature of this universe of which they constitute only a small part. He wants to draw them out of the narrow angle through which they look at the divine message. From that angle, they see themselves as large, occupying important positions. Preoccupied with their own selves, positions and interests, and the fact that Muhammad was chosen by God in preference to them, they overlook the great truth expounded in the Quran and set before them by Muhammad. This great truth relates to the universe, to all generations of humanity, and carries absolutism that transcends time, place and people.

When you show ingratitude, you are being nothing other than careless, gross and vulgar. You are denying the One who created the earth and placed firm structures over it, blessing it and assigning its varied provisions. He has indeed operated the systems of the universe, adorned the nearest sky with secure lights. Everything in the heavens and the earth willingly submit themselves to Him, while you, a mere single inhabitant on earth, arrogantly refuses to accept the truth. The presentation of these facts in the chapter typically shakes every heart: *That is the Lord of the worlds! And He made on it firm mountains from above it and He blessed it and ordained its subsistence within it in four days equally for the ones who ask.* (41:9-41:10)

The chapter begins here by mentioning the fact of creating the earth in two days and comments on this first stage of creation before telling us the rest of the story. The comment says: It is He who is the Lord of all the worlds, and yet you claim others to be His equals when it is He who created the earth you live on. How absurd and ghastly! We need to dwell for a moment on every phrase of this Quranic text before we turn our attention to the mention of the heavens in the next sign.

Mountains: *And He made on it firm mountains from above it and He blessed it and ordained its subsistence within it in four days equally for the ones who ask* (41:10) are often described in the Quran as being firm, and in some instances the purpose of their positioning is that they prevent the earth from shaking or swaying. This means that the mountains are firm in themselves and stabilize the earth, ensuring that it remains well balanced. In times gone by, people used to think that the earth was based on firm foundations. They are told today that the earth is nothing more than a small ball that floats in a

great expanse, without support. They may be scared when they listen to such words for the first time, and some of them may begin to look warily askance, worried that the earth might shake or fall in deep space. Let such people be reassured. God's hand holds the heavens and the earth, preventing their disappearance. Should they vanish, no one else would hold them in place. Such people should banish worrying thoughts, because the laws that govern the universe are set in operation by the Almighty who holds sway over all things.

What is meant here by the application of God s design is that it was His will to do so. The word: 'then, may not signify a chronological order; rather, it may mean turning to something higher. In our sense, the sky is higher. Then, He applied His design to the sky, which was but smoked: *Again, He turned His attention to the heaven while it was smoke and He said to it and to the earth: Approach both of you willing or unwilling.* (41:11) Scientists believe that before the existence of stars there was what they call the nebula, a cloud of gas, or rather, smoke.

The sign then adds a statement expressing an awesome truth: *They both said: We approached as ones who are obedient.* (41:11) This is a remarkable reference to the fact of the universe being under God's control. It submits to its Creator and willingly does His bidding.

Again the sky: *They both said: We approached as ones who are obedient.* (41:12) nearest to the earth can have several meanings. It could be the nearest galaxy to us..... It could mean something else that comprises stars and planets that shine for us like lights. These skies are made secure from devilment, as can be understood from other references in the Quran. Quite what this entails is beyond our grasp and hence our knowledge is limited to what the Quran tells us.

Can anyone other than Him design all this? Can anyone other than the Almighty who knows all control the whole universe and conduct its affairs?

Given this is the state of the entire universe, what position should be assigned to those who reject God's Oneness and attribute partners to Him? How should their reckless arrogance be requited? (41:13-41:18)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evi-

dence and experiences) in order to answer questions, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

WHAT IS PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING?

Your teacher presents you with a problem, not lectures or assignments or exercises. Since you are not handed "content", your learning becomes active in the sense that you discover and work with content that you determine to be necessary to solve the problem. Your teacher acts as facilitator and mentor, rather than a source of "solutions".

Problem based learning will provide you with opportunities to:

* examine and try out what you know
* discover what you need to learn
* develop your people skills for achieving higher performance in teams
* improve your communications skills
* state and defend positions with evidence and sound argument
* become more flexible in processing information and meeting obligations
* practice skills that you will need after your education

WRITE A PROBLEM STATEMENT

A problem statement should come from your/the group's analysis of what you know, and what you will need to know to solve it. You will need: a written statement; the agreement of your group on the statement; feedback on this statement from your instructor. (This may be optional, but is a good idea)

Lesson 61(3). Critical Thinking Intellectual Standard Clarity (understandable, to be clear)

The word "clarity" or 'to be clear (*bayan*)" occurs over two hundred times in the Quran. The Quranic message describes itself as having clarity or being clear, having clear signs, making things clear. The clarity in the Quranic message is to guide us to the distinction between truth and error. Clarity means to be understandable such that the meaning can be grasped; to be free from confusion or ambiguity, to remove obscurities. Clarity is essential as an opening or beginning or gateway standard because if a statement is unclear, it cannot determined if it is accurate or relevant. In fact, nothing can be determined about it because students may not as yet know what it means. They can only assume that we understand a thought when we can elaborate on it, illustrate it and give an example of it.

Quranic Chapter 41: They Were Explained Distinctly (al-Fussilat) Signs 41:19-41:25

Makkah: *On a Day when will be assembled*
the enemies of God to the fire,
then, they will be marching in rank (41:19)
until when they drew near it.
Witness will be borne against them
by their having the ability to hear,
and by their sight and by their skins
as to what they had been doing. (41:20)
And they will say to their skins: Why bore you witness against us?
They will say: We were given speech by God
Who gave speech to all things.
And He created you the first time
and to Him you will be returned. (41:21)
And you had not been covering yourselves
so that witness be borne against you
by your having the ability to hear
or by your sight
or by your skins but that you thought that God knows
not much of what you do. (41:22)
And that your thought,
which you thought about your Lord has dealt destruction to you.
Then, you became among the ones who are losers. (41:23)
Then, even if they endure patiently,
yet the fire will be the place of lodging for them.

And if they ask for favor,
yet they will not be of the ones to whom favor is shown. (41:24)
And We allotted for them comrades
who were made to appear pleasing to them
whatever was before them and whatever was behind them.
And the saying was realized against them in communities
that passed away before them of jinn and humankind.
Truly, they, they had been ones who are losers. (41:25)

COMMENTARY°

On the day when God's enemies will be gathered together before the fire, they will be driven onwards until, when they reach it, their ears, their eyes and their very skins will bear witness against them, speaking of what they used to do [on earth]. (41:19-41:24)

As God so commands their own organs, they are overwhelmed and respond in complete obedience: *And they will say to their skins: Why bore you witness against us?* (41:21) They will put the facts clearly before them, attempting to hide nothing: *They will say: We were given speech by God Who gave speech to all things.* (41:21) It is He who made tongues the organs of speech. He can easily give speech to other organs. He gave speech to all things, making them speak and explain things as they are. *And He created you the first time and to Him you will be returned.* (41:21) From Him all originate, and to Him all shall return. There is no escape from His authority, neither at the beginning, nor at the end. Their minds used to deny this; now their skins state it to them in an undeniable way.

The remainder of the comments may be a continuation of what their own organs say to them, or equally it may be a comment on this amazing situation: *And you had not been covering yourselves so that witness be borne against you by your having the ability to hear or by your sight or by your skins but that you thought that God knows not much of what you do.* (41:22) It never occurred to you that these, your organs, could rebel against you. In fact, you could not have hidden yourselves from your organs even if you had tried. *And you had not been covering yourselves so that witness be borne against you by your having the ability to hear or by your sight or by your skins but that you thought that God knows not much of what you do.* (41:22) Your foolish and ignorant thoughts deceived you, leading you to hell: *And that your thought, which you thought about your Lord has dealt destruction to you. Then, you became among the ones who are losers.* (41:23)

We then have the final comment: *Then, even if they endure pa-*

tiently, yet the fire will be the place of lodging for them.(41:24) What an absurd situation. Patience now entails enduring the fire. It is no longer the patience that withstands adversity in order to achieve a cherished goal and earn reward from God. It is a sort of patience that incurs the penalty of hell where they abide: *And if they ask for favor, yet they will not be of the ones to whom favor is shown.* (41:24)

We have assigned to the ungrateful companions who made their past and present seem goodly to them, but the sentence has fallen due upon them together with bygone generations of jinn and humans. They will indeed be lost. *And We allotted for them comrades who were made to appear pleasing to them whatever was before them and whatever was behind them. And the saying was realized against them in communities that passed away before them of jinn and humankind.* (41:25)

They are too proud to worship God when they are subject to His power. Their own hearts lead them to ruin and ultimately to God s punishment. God allocates them wicked companions who whisper in their ears, assuring them that all the evil they see around them is good, and who present their own bad deeds to them in a fair appearance so that they do not see how foul these are. Perhaps the worst thing that can happen to a person is that he loses his balanced judgment and can no longer see how foul or deviant his actions are. In this way, he perceives everything he does as good and fair. Inevitably, though, this leads him to ruin. When the ungrateful reach this stage, they find themselves among the lost herd of past communities that suffered Gods punishment: *Truly, they, they had been ones who are losers.* (41:25)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

THINKING ALOUD

Thinking aloud about the problem we are faced with in these Quranic signs. Engage in thinking aloud to yourself. What is known as private speech never disappears. Whenever we encounter unfamiliar or demanding activities in our lives, private speech resurfaces. It is a tool that helps us overcome ob-

stacles and acquire new skills.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

When I focused on clarity, I began to notice when I was being unclear in communicating with others.

When I was reading, I began to notice when I was clear about what I was reading.

I focused on the four techniques of clarification:

1. Stating what I am saying explicitly and precisely (with careful consideration given to my choice of words),
2. Elaborating on my meaning in other words
3. Giving examples of what I mean from experiences I have had.
4. I used analogies, metaphors, pictures, or diagrams to illustrate what I meant.

In other words, I frequently stated, elaborated, illustrated and exemplified my points.

LESSON 61(4). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL STANDARD FAIRNESS (RIGHT-MINDED)

Having fairness is described as in the Quran as having wisdom (*hikmah*). It is considered to be the ability to form judgments that are free from discrimination or dishonesty. Having wisdom in the Quranic sense is to have experience, knowledge and good or right judgment. Out of these develops a sense of impartiality so that we learn to weigh two differing points of view equally.

Developing a sense of fairness is the ability to make judgments free from discrimination or dishonesty. Having wisdom is to have experience, knowledge and good judgment. From this fair-mindedness or wisdom comes a sense of impartiality, that is, an inclination to weigh two views or opinions equally.

Using a sense of fairness when weighing two views or opinions helps us overcome any lingering egocentricity. We may have thought that we knew the truth only to find that we were wrong. We also learn not to judge any ideas until we are familiar with them and we have fully understood them.

Thinking critically, we are able to consider both the strengths and the weaknesses of differing points of view. We learn to put ourselves in place of others in order to understand them and what they are saying. We learn to overcome our self-centered point of view of identifying truth with our immediate perceptions or long-held beliefs. We gain the ability to accurately state the viewpoints and reasoning of others. We reason from premises, assumptions and ideas that are not our own. We can recall times when we were wrong but convinced that we were right. We begin to realize that our behavior and judgments affect others so that we learn to see things from another's point of view. We might ask ourselves.

QURANIC CHAPTER 41: THEY WERE EXPLAINED DISTINCTLY (AL-FUSSILAT) SIGNS 41:26-41:32

Makkah: *And those who are ungrateful said:*
Hear not this, the Quran,
but talk idly about it while it is being recited
so that perhaps you will prevail. (41:26)
We will cause those who were ungrateful
to experience a severe punishment.
And We will give recompense to them for the bad deeds
of what they had been doing. (41:27)
That is the recompense of the enemies of God:
The fire. For them is the infinite abode in it,
recompense because they had been negating Our signs. (41:28)
And those who were ungrateful would say:

Our Lord! Cause us to see those who caused us to go astray
among jinn and humankind.
We will lay them both beneath our feet
so that they become of the lowest. (41:29)
Truly, those who said: Our Lord is God, again,
they went straight, the angels come forth to them:
Neither fear nor feel remorse, but rejoice in the Gardens
which you had been promised. (41:30)
We were protectors in this present life and in the world to come.
And you will have in it that for which your souls lust
and in it is what you call for, (41:31)
a hospitality from the Forgiving, Compassionate. (41:32)

COMMENTARY°

One aspect of what bad companions persuaded them to do was to fight the Quran when they realized how powerful was its argument: *And those who are ungrateful said: Hear not this, the Quran, but talk idly about it while it is being recited so that perhaps you will prevail.* (41:26) The elders of the Quraysh in Makkah used to counsel each other to do just this, and they also persuaded the masses to do the same. They realized that they were no match for the Quran, its beauty, power and eloquence.They claimed that it cast a magical spell over their minds and ruined their lives, causing division between a person and his children or a man and his wife. It is true that the Quran causes such division, but only through Gods criterion that separates faith from unfaith, and guidance from going astray. The Quran wins people's hearts so that they no longer value any other bond as the do their bond of faith.

In response to their singular remark they are given a stern warning: (41:27-41:28) We soon see them suffering in hell and see how the deluded are so angry with the ones who led them astray. They realize now that it was they who led them to their fate when they persuaded them that their foul deeds were fair and goodly. *And those who were ungrateful would say: Our Lord! Cause us to see those who caused us to go astray among jinn and humankind. We will lay them both beneath our feet so that they become of the lowest.* (41:29) They are not merely angry with them; they want to exact revenge: What a contrast with their close friendly ties in this present world.

A different type of bond is that which the believers have. These are the ones who take the right path of endeavour to do only what is good. God assigns to them angels to give them reassurance, bring them the good news of their prospects in heaven and to be their

guardians, both in the life of this world and the world to come: (41:30-41:32)

To remain steadfast in pursuing what is entailed by the declaration, Our Lord is God,' means to keep it alive in one's conscience, to give proof to it in ones life and to discharge the responsibilities it imposes. This is serious, important and hard work. Therefore, it deserves the abundant grace God grants them: a friendly relation with angels who, as God tells us, reassure the believers with sweet words: (41:30-40:31) They also describe heaven to them, knowing that they will have there all that they desire and is pleasing to them. They make it even more inviting and pleasing: *A hospitality from the Forgiving, Compassionate.* (41:32) It is a gift from God and a place assigned to them through His forgiveness and endless mercy.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

HOW DOES OPEN-MINDED CRITICAL THINKING HELP?

- Refine/revise the topic either narrowing or broadening it according to outcomes of research
- Rank or indicate the importance of three sources of research
- Clarify any opinion, prejudice, or bias their authors have
- While an opinion is a belief or attitude toward someone or some thing, a prejudice is preconceived opinion without basis of fact while bias is an opinion based on fact or research.
- Identify key words and concepts that seem to repeat. Is there vocabulary you need to define?
- Are there concepts you need to understand better?
- In reviewing your research, are there
- Sequences or patterns that emerge?
- Opposing points of view, contradictions, or facts that don't "fit?"
- Summarize two points of view that you need to address
- What questions remain to be answered?

Summary of critical thinking:

- Determine the facts of a new situation or subject without

prejudice

- Place these facts and information in a pattern so that you can understand and explain them
- Accept or reject your resource values and conclusions based upon your experience, judgment, and beliefs

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I tested myself before I went to class by trying to summarize, orally or in writing, the main points of the previous class meeting because

I realize if I cannot summarize main points, I haven't learned them.

I learned to test my thinking using intellectual standards: Being clear, accurate, relevant, precise, reasonable.

Lesson 61(5). Critical Thinking Strategy Embodying a Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective

Human thought is relational and selective. It is impossible to understand any person, event, or phenomenon from every vantage point simultaneously. Our purposes often control how we see things. Critical thinking requires that this fact be taken into account when analyzing and assessing thinking.

How is Point of View (Frame of Reference, Perspective) Defined?

The point of view for this course on Quranic Studies is that of the Quran. All the words in the Quran are the Words of God as revealed to Prophet Muhammad. The Prophet related whatever was revealed to him through the Angel Gabriel (*ruh al-qudus*) with God's permission.

The Quranic point of view gives guidance to humanity through the prophetic mission, to bring people from the darkness of ignorance into the light of knowledge and wisdom. As 14:1 says: *This is a Book We caused to descend to you so that you have brought humanity out from the darkness into the light with the permission of their Lord to the path of The Almighty, The Worthy of Praise.* (14:1)

In the Quranic revelation, darkness is not just an individual's state of ignorance, but includes his worship of material gain in place of worshipping God, egoism, being a slave to his desires and being greedy, among other things.

On the level of society, darkness refers to injustice, oppression and/or discrimination and persecution as the sign to Moses (14:5) says: *Certainly, We sent Moses with Our signs saying: Bring out your folk from the shadows into the light and remind them of the Days of God. Truly, in that are signs for every enduring, grateful one.* (14:5)

The darkness here refers to the oppression and injustice of Pharaoh while the light is that of justice and freedom. The Quranic signs that refer to darkness or shadow and light always refer to darkness or shadow in the plural, while light is in the singular referring to the path of God-consciousness (*taqwa*).

Quranic Chapter 41: They Were Explained Distinctly (al-Fussilat) Signs 41:33-41:44

Makkah: *And who has a fairer saying*
than he who called to God
and did as one in accord with morality, and said:
I am one of the ones who submit to God. (41:33)
Not on the same level are benevolence or the evil deed.

Drive back with what is fairer.
*Then, behold he who between **you** and between him was enmity*
as if he had been a protector, a loyal friend. (41:34)
And none will be in receipt of it but those who endured patiently.
And none will be in receipt of it but
the possessor of a sublime allotment. (41:35)
But if Satan sows enmity, sowing enmity in thee,
then, seek refuge in God.
Truly, He is The Hearing, The Knowing. (41:36)
And of His signs are the nighttime and the daytime
and the sun and the moon.
Prostrate not yourselves to the sun nor to the moon,
but prostrate yourselves to God Who created both of them
if it is He you had been worshiping. (41:37)
But if they grew arrogant,
*then, those who are with **your** Lord glorify Him*
during the nighttime and the daytime
and they never grow weary. (41:38)
*And among His signs are that **you** see the earth*
as that which is humble. But when
We caused water to descend to it, it quivered and swelled.
Truly, He Who gives life to it is
the One Who Gives Life to the dead.
Truly, He is Powerful over everything. (41:39)
Truly, those who blaspheme Our signs are not hidden from Us.
Is he who is cast down into the fire better off,
or he who approaches as one who is safe
on the Day of Resurrection?
Do as you willed. Truly, He is Seeing of what you do. (41:40)
Truly, those who were ungrateful for the Remembrance
when it drew near them are not hidden from Us.
And, truly, it is a mighty Book! (41:41)
Falsehood approaches it not from before it,
nor from behind it.
It is a sending down successively
from The Wise, The Worthy of Praise. (41:42)
*Nothing is said to **you** but what, truly,*
was said to the Messengers before thee.
*Truly, **your** Lord is, certainly, the Possessor of Forgiveness,*
and the Possessor of Painful Repayment. (41:43)
And if We made this a non-Arabic Recitation,
they would have said:

Why were His signs not explained distinctly:
A non-Arab tongue and an Arab!
Say: It is a guidance for those who believe and a healing.
And as for those who believed not,
there is a heaviness in their ears
and blindness in their hearts.
Those are given notice from a far place. (41:44)

COMMENTARY°

An advocate of the divine faith must put his addressees face to face with reality. He has to confront people s deviation, ignorance, inflated appreciation of their own deeds, as also their instinctive abhorrence of being told that they are wrong. He is opposed by people s determination to serve their own interests and maintain positions that might be threatened by the principle of equality of all people, which is basic to divine faith. To face all this as part of the task of advocating divine faith is indeed very hard. Yet it is something truly great: Who speaks better than he who calls people to God, does what is right, and says: I am one of those who have surrendered themselves to God. *And who has a fairer saying than he who called to God and did as one in accord with morality, and said: I am one of the ones who submit to God.* (41:33)

Taking all this into account, a word of advocacy, calling on people to believe in God's Oneness, is the best word that may be said on earth. It is at the forefront of good words that are raised to God in heaven, provided it is endorsed by good action and confirmed with self surrender to Him. Thus, such advocacy becomes pure and sincere, free of self interest. The advocate's aim is merely to discharge his duty by presenting the divine message. Once he has discharged his duty, he should not care whether his words are rejected or whether people are rude or boastful in their denials. He is merely presenting what is good, which puts him in the higher position. Anyone who opposes him entertains evil, and, as such, is far below an advocate of God: *Not on the same level are benevolence or the evil deed. Drive back with what is fairer.* (41:34) Advocates of the divine message cannot return evil with its like. A good deed cannot be equal in its impact or value to a bad one. Patient perseverance, forbearance and rising above the desire to return evil with its like eventually brings people back to their senses. Their earlier hardness softens and they become friendly: *Then, behold he who between you and between him was enmity as if he had been a protector, a loyal friend.*(41:34)

Such forbearance, which requires us to repel an evil deed with

a good one, rising above feelings of anger, is a sublime grade which cannot be attained by everyone. It does not merely require patience in the face of adversity; it is also a blessing which God bestows on His servants who try hard to achieve it: *And none will be in receipt of it but those who endured patiently. And none will be in receipt of it but the possessor of a sublime allotment.* (41:35) We say that it is a sublime grade; in fact it is so sublime that Muhammad, God s messenger, who never showed anger for anything personal, yet nothing could stand to his anger when it was for God's sake, is told, as indeed every advocate of the Divine message is told: *But if Satan sows enmity, sowing enmity in you, then, seek refuge in God. Truly, He is The Hearing, The Knowing.* (41:36) Anger may open the way to Satan's prompting who will then try to persuade us to be impatient and unforgiving when others resort to evil. In such a situation, we will do well to seek refuge with God against Satan. This is the best shelter against Satan's efforts to exploit our anger.

CLEAR UNIVERSAL SIGNS

Among His signs are the night and the day, and the sun and the moon. Do not prostrate yourselves before the sun or the moon; but prostrate yourselves before God, who has created them, if it is Him you really worship. *And of His signs are the nighttime and the daytime and the sun and the moon. Prostrate not yourselves to the sun nor to the moon, but prostrate yourselves to God Who created both of them if it is He you had been worshiping.* (41:37)

The sign also points to a particular aspect of deviation. Some people exaggerated the importance of the sun and the moon, and thus deviated from the truth. They worshipped them in the hope of drawing nearer to God through worshipping the most beautiful of His creatures. The Quran puts them back on track, removing their confusion and saying to them that if they want to worship God they must not prostrate themselves before the sun and the moon. Instead, they must prostrate themselves before God who created them. It is the Creator alone whom they, and all creatures, should worship.

If they persist in their arrogance, it will make no difference. Others offer worship to God in all humility: *But if they grew arrogant, then, those who are with your Lord glorify Him during the nighttime and the daytime and they never grow weary.* (41:38) The first creatures we think of as being referred to by the expression, 'those who are with your Lord,' are the angels.

The earth, their mother from which they originate and to which they return, stands humble before God as it receives life from His

hand. On the surface of the earth they are no more like ants; and from the earth they derive all their food and drink. This earth, however, presents a different attitude from theirs: "Another of His signs is this: you see the earth lying desolate, but when We send down rain water upon it, it stirs and swells [with life]. He who brings it to life will surely give life to the dead. He has power over all things: *And among His signs are that **you** have seen the earth as that which is humble. But when We caused water to descend to it, it quivered and swelled. Truly, He Who gives life to it is the One Who Gives Life to the dead. Truly, He is Powerful over everything.* (41:39)

The first description, *hamidah*, occurs in the following sign: *O humanity! If you had been in doubt about the Upraising, truly, We created you from earth dust and, again, from seminal fluid and, again, from a clot and, again, from tissue that was formed and that was not formed so that we make it manifest to you. We establish in the wombs whom We will for a term, that which is determined. And, again, We bring you out as infant children and, again, you may reach the coming of age. And among you there is he whom death will call to itself. And among you there is he who is returned to the most wretched lifetime so that he knows not anything after some knowledge. And **you** have seen the earth as that which is lifeless. Yet when We caused water to descend on it, it quivered and it swelled and put forth every lovely pair.* (22: 5)

Khashi'ah has a totally different context: *And of His signs are the nighttime and the daytime and the sun and the moon. Prostrate not yourselves to the sun nor to the moon, but prostrate yourselves to God Who created both of them if it is He you had been worshiping. But if they grew arrogant, then, those who are with **your** Lord glorify Him during the nighttime and the daytime and they never grow weary. And among His signs are that **you** have seen the earth as that which is humble. But when We caused water to descend to it, it quivered and swelled. Truly, He Who gives life to it is the One Who Gives Life to the dead. Truly, He is Powerful over everything.* (41:37-41:39)

The comment at the end of the sign refers to bringing the dead back to life, citing the earth as an example:*And among His signs are that **you** have seen the earth as that which is humble. But when We caused water to descend to it, it quivered and swelled. Truly, He Who gives life to it is the One Who Gives Life to the dead. Truly, He is Powerful over everything.*(41:39) This image is frequently used in the Quran as an example of how the dead are resurrected on the Day of Judgement. Indeed, the reviving of the earth points to the facts of resurrection and God's limitless power. The image of the earth stir-

ring with life is close to our hearts, touching them before it addresses our minds. Moreover, when life springs in what is dead it gives a subtle feeling of the power behind it. The Quran addresses human nature in its own language, using the shortest way.

HOW TO DESCRIBE UNFAITH

Against this backdrop of universal signs, the chapter condemns and warns those who deny God's signs and dispute His revelations:

Those who distort the meaning of Our revelations are not hidden from Us. Who is in a better state: he who is cast into the fire, or he who shall come safe on Resurrection Day? Do what you will; He sees all that you do. *Truly, those who blaspheme Our signs are not hidden from Us.* (41:40)

The warning begins in an implicit but fearful way, stating that such people are not hidden from Us. God is fully aware of them. They will have to account for what they perpetrate, no matter how they try to distort meanings or resort to deception. They may think that they can escape God's punishment in the same way as their deception spared them accountability before human authority. However, the warning is then stated clearly: *Is he who is cast down into the fire better off, or he who approaches as one who is safe on the Day of Resurrection?* (41:40) This puts before them the prospect that lies ahead. It is they who will be cast in the fire, in contrast with the believers who will be safe on the Day of Resurrection. The sign concludes with another implicit warning: *Do as you willed. Truly, He is Seeing of what you do.* (41:40) Terrible indeed is the fate of the one who is given the freedom to do what he wills and who distorts the meaning of God's revelations when God sees all that he does.

The chapter then speaks about those who specifically deny the Quranic revelations, describing the Quran as a sublime book, admitting no falsehood: (41:41-41:44)

How could falsehood touch or creep into this book when it comes from God who is the truth absolute? It is a book which clearly presents the word of truth, one that is permanently linked to the truth that ensures the proper conduct of the affairs of the universe. How could falsehood come into it when it is a sublime book, given protection by God who undertakes to keep it intact: *Truly, We, We sent down the Remembrance and, truly, We are ones who guard it.* (15:9)

Anyone who looks carefully at the Quran will find in it the truth it has come to establish. We find this truth in its spirit and its text: it is simple, natural, reassuring, and addresses human nature in its to-

tality with profound effect. *Falsehood approaches it not from before it, nor from behind it. It is a sending down successively from The Wise, The Worthy of Praise.* (41:42) Wisdom is clearly apparent in its structure, directives, the way it was revealed, and in its direct address to the human heart. God who revealed the Quran is worthy of praise. There is in the Quran much that makes our hearts eager to express its praise of God.

The section then establishes a bond between the Quran and earlier revelations, and between the Prophet Muhammad and all messengers sent before his time. It is all one message and one faith. Likewise, it is received in the same way: the same rejection and the same objections. Yet it establishes one bond, making one family which endures the same experience and feels the same pain. Ultimately, it follows the same way, leading to the same goal. It is certainly true: *Nothing is said to you but what, truly, was said to the Messengers before thee.* (41:43) The impact this fact can have when it becomes firmly established in the minds of believers is truly profound.

Included in what was said to God's messengers, and to Muhammad, the last among them, was: *Truly, your Lord is, certainly, the Possessor of Forgiveness, and the Possessor of Painful Repayment.* (41:43) Thus balance is emphasized. A believer then hopes for God's grace and forgiveness, never despairing that these will be bestowed on him by God's will, but always fearing to incur God's punishment. Striking the right balance is an essential characteristic of the Quranic message.

The section then reminds the Arabs of God's blessing by making Arabic the language of the Quran. At the same time, it refers to their contentious disputes and rejection. (41:44) They do not listen to it in its Arabic form. In fact, they feared it because it addressed their Arab nature in their own language. Therefore, they urged each other to adopt this strategy: (41:26) Had God expressed His message in a different tongue, they would still have objected to it, calling for it to be put clearly in Arabic. They would object even if part of it were in Arabic and the other part in a different language. Their notion, therefore, was to argue in all cases and all situations.

The truth that emerges from this argument about the form given to the message is that this book provides guidance and healing to believers. Believers' hearts appreciate its nature and truth, receive its guidance and benefit from its healing. Those who do not believe remain in confusion, and their hearts do not feel the cheerfulness of its message. Therefore, it becomes like deafness to their ears and blind-

ness in their eyes. They recognize nothing, because they are far removed from the nature of this book and its address: *Say: It is a guidance for those who believe and a healing. And as for those who believed not, there is a heaviness in their ears and blindness in their hearts. Those are given notice from a far place.* (41:44)

We feel the truth of this statement in every community and generation. Some people are profoundly affected by the Quran. It transforms them, giving them a different type of life, and enables them to achieve miracles within themselves and in their environment. Others feel this Quran too heavy for their hearts and ears. When they listen to it, they only grow more deaf and blind. The Quran never changes; It is hearts that are different.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What do you believe? How do you see things?
What reasons seem most persuasive to them?
What theory do you think best explains what their teachers are trying to explain?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

Remember what you said about these people before we studied them?
Which of our original beliefs were false or misleading?
Why did we think that way? Where did we get these ideas?
How do people come to think they know what other people are like before they know anything about them?
What false beliefs might other people have about us? Why?

LESSON 61(6). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY

THINKING INDEPENDENTLY

The Quran teaches us to think for ourselves when we read sign 2:256 that says that there is no compulsion in religion (*din*).

With this sign from God's point of view, we learn that it is up to each of us to have a close read of the Quran and decide whether or not to follow it. From reading the Quran with a critical mind, we learn how right judgment is clear from error. If we develop the following Quranic strategies or principles, and then practice the application of the principles, we will enhance our sense of intuition and insight. We will enhance our ability to reflect on our beliefs and actions. Quranic thinking encourages autonomous thinking, thinking for ourselves. We acquire many of our beliefs at an early age when we have a strong tendency to form beliefs for irrational reasons (because we want to believe, because we are rewarded for believing or punished for not doing so).

Quranic thinkers use critical skills and insights to reveal and eradicate beliefs to which they cannot rationally assent such as the beliefs of extremists. Quranic thinkers learn not to passively accept the beliefs of others; rather, they analyze issues themselves, reject unjustified authorities, and recognize the contributions of justified authorities. They thoughtfully form principles of thought and action; they do not mindlessly accept those presented to them. Nor are they unduly influenced by the language of another. If they find that a set of categories or distinctions is more appropriate than that suggested by another, they will use it. Recognizing that categories serve human purposes, they use those categories which best serve their purpose at the time. They are not limited by accepted ways of doing things. They evaluate both goals and how to achieve them. They do not accept as true, or reject as false, beliefs they do not understand. They are not easily manipulated.

Independent thinkers strive to incorporate all known relevant knowledge and insight into their thought and behavior. They strive to determine for themselves when information is relevant, when to apply a concept, or when to make use of a skill. They are self-monitoring: they catch their own mistakes; they don't need to be told what to do every step of the way.

The purpose or goal needs to be understood when you concern yourselves with accuracy and truth. You should ask yourself:

What evidence do I have to support this purpose?
How it can be explained to help others understand?
Can objections be raised from other points of view?
Are there any limitations to our point if view?

In the Quranic view, there is no compelling of ourselves or others to whatever it is that a person believes. This is what the Quran calls: "right judgment

that is clear from error". It is free of being compelled to believe something.

It is possible to believe something because those around us believe in it or because someone has rewarded us for believing such-and-such. Or, it may be that our interests are best served by believing something or because someone is more comfortable believing this. It could also be that we believe in something because our ego and image of ourselves is defined by believing this-or-that. None of these reasons are that of a Quranic critical thinker because these reasons lack the evidence which the Quranic message provides. Each of us has to make up his or her own mind using 'right judgment' about what it is that we believe.

In order for students to be sure that their beliefs and actions are based on good reasons and evidence provided by the Quranic message, they need to be rational. They do this by critiquing their own irrationality which includes their own fears and desires. They are rational when they cultivate their desire for clarity, accuracy and fair-mindedness and, then, integrate them into their behavior and thoughts.

QURANIC CHAPTER 41: THEY WERE EXPLAINED DISTINCTLY (AL-FUSSILAT)

SIGNS 41:45-41:54

Makkah: *And, certainly, We gave Moses the Book.*
Then, they were at variance about it.
And if it were not for a Word that had preceded from your Lord,
it would have been decided between them.
But, truly, they are in uncertainty,
ones in grave doubt about it. (41:45)
Whoever did as one in accord with morality, it is for himself.
And whoever did evil, it is against himself,
and your Lord is not unjust to His servants. (41:46)
To Him is returned the knowledge of the Hour.
No fruits go forth from its sheath
and no female conceives or brings forth offspring
but with His knowledge.
And on a Day He will cry out to them:
Where are My ascribed associates? They would say:
We proclaimed to You that none of us
was a witness to that. (41:47)
Gone astray from them is what they had been calling to before.
They would think that there is for them no asylum. (41:48)
The human being grows not weary of supplicating for good,
but if the worst afflicted him, then,
he is hopeless, desperate. (41:49)

And, truly, if We caused him to experience mercy from Us,
after some tribulation afflicted him, he will, certainly, say:
This is due to me. And I think not that the Hour
will be one that arises,
but if I were returned to my Lord,
truly, with Him will be the fairer for me.
Then, certainly, We will tell those who were ungrateful
of what they did.
And We will cause them to experience
a harsh punishment. (41:50)
And when We were gracious to the human being,
he turned aside, withdrew aside.
But when the worst afflicted him,
then, he is full of supplication. (41:51)
Say: Considered you that even though it had been from God,
again, you were ungrateful for it.
Who is one who goes more astray
than he who is in wide breach? (41:52)
We will cause them to see Our signs on the horizons
and within themselves until it becomes clear to them
that it is The Truth.
*Suffices not **your** Lord that, truly,*
He is Witness over all things? (41:53)
They are hesitant about the meeting with their Lord.
Truly, He is who One Who Encloses everything. (41:54)

COMMENTARY°

We feel the truth of this statement in every community and generation. Some people are profoundly affected by the Quran. It transforms them, giving them a different type of life, and enables them to achieve miracles within themselves and in their environment. Others feel this Quran too heavy for their hearts and ears. When they listen to it, they only grow more deaf and blind. The Quran never changes; it is hearts that are different.

A reference follows to Moses and his book, and how his people differed in their attitude to the Quran. *And, certainly, We gave Moses the Book. Then, they were at variance about it. And if it were not for a Word that had preceded from **your** Lord, it would have been decided between them. But, truly, they are in uncertainty, ones in grave doubt about it*: (41:45) Likewise, He has decreed that judgment on the question of His final message will be similarly deferred. He thus lets people do as they like, and they will ultimately receive what their

action merits: *Whoever did as one in accord with morality, it is for himself. And whoever did evil, it is against himself, and your Lord is not unjust to His servants.* (41:46)

This message proclaims that humanity as attained maturity. This makes us responsible for our choices. Such responsibility is based on individual accountability. Therefore, each one is free to choose, knowing that *your Lord is not unjust to His servants.*

As judgment is deferred to the Day of Judgment, the chapter makes clear that knowledge of its timing belongs to God alone. God's knowledge is described by highlighting some of its aspects in an inspiring way. This serves as a prelude to a scene from the Day of Judgement when the ungrateful are questioned, and their answers are reported: *To Him is returned the knowledge of the Hour. No fruits go forth from its sheath and no female conceives or brings forth offspring but with His knowledge.* . (41:47)

Our mind then imagines those who have gone astray, as they stand before God, realizing that His knowledge encompasses everything, no matter how well concealed it is. They face the questioning: *And on a Day He will cry out to them: Where are My ascribed associates? They would say: We proclaimed to You that none of us was a witness to that.* (41:47) They will declare that none of them will then claim any partners to God.

They will know nothing of their previous claims. They will realize that there is no escape from their fate. They will forget their past and think only of their present situation. *Gone astray from them is what they had been calling to before. They would think that there is for them no asylum.* (41:48)

Such is the day about which they take no precautions despite the fact that we are eager to achieve every good thing and fear what brings us harm. At this point, the chapter shows us our naked reality, without cover or disguise.

Yet should God grant him something of His grace after he has suffered some harm, he will be so elated that he will forget how this grace was given to him, and he will not give due thanks. On the contrary, he will consider that he has deserved this grace and that he should have it forever. He will even dismiss the Day of Judgment thinking that it will never come: *Then, certainly, We will tell those who were ungrateful of what they did.* (41:50) He will boast of his own position, thinking that he deserves favoritism with God. He will even go further than this, denying the Day of Judgment and, thus, disbelieving in God. Nevertheless, he thinks that should he be returned to God, he will have a secure position with Him. This betrays

no small degree of arrogance. Here the chapter issues a suitable warning to those who are so arrogant: *And We will cause them to experience a harsh punishment.* (41:50)

Now that they face their own naked reality, the question is put to them about what they would do if it is proven that the message they deny is actually God's own message? Are they really prepared to expose themselves to the consequences of such rejection: *Say: Considered you that even though it had been from God, again, you were ungrateful for it. Who is one who goes more astray than he who is in wide breach?* (41:52) It is a possibility to be reckoned with. Have they taken any steps to deal with this should it come true?

This is the final note in the chapter, and it is a profound one. It is a promise by God to humanity to put before them some of the secrets in the universe and some of the secrets working within themselves. These are His signs. They will thus be able to realize that this faith, this book and its discourse are the truth. Indeed it is, for it is all from God, and whose word is truer than God's? And God s promise has certainly come true. Over the fourteen centuries that followed this promise He has made many of His signs in the universe and within us known to us, and He continues to show us more of these every day.

Yet we have not reached the end of the road. God's promise remains true and valid: *We will cause them to see Our signs on the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is The Truth.* (41:53) Early signs of the fulfilment of the last part of this promise have come to be noticed since the early years of the twentieth century. People are flocking from different parts of the world to join the camp of faith. Many are coming forward through material science. Numerous others are coming from far away, despite the great tide of atheism that almost drowned the earth in the past. This tide of atheism is now on the retreat, although to all appearances it seems still to be rising. By the close of this twentieth century it may almost have disappeared, by God's will. For, God's promise will certainly come true: *Suffices not your Lord that, truly, He is Witness over all things?* (41:53) It is He who has made this promise, and it is He who knows the truth and is witness to it.

They are hesitant about the meeting with their Lord. (41:54) It is because of their doubt that they will meet their Lord that people continue to perpetrate what they do. Yet the promise is true, no doubt. *Truly, He is who One Who Encloses everything.* (41:54) How can they escape meeting Him when He encompasses all?

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions,** (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLSS

Quranic content is understood by thinking, organized by thinking, analyzed by thinking, synthesized by thinking, evaluated by thinking, transformed by thinking.

You will learn that the Quran teaches you HOW to think through reading it, writing it, speaking it and listening (hearing) to it in any language with which you are familiar. Of course, it is best if this is done with the original Arabic revelation, but not knowing Quranic Arabic should not stop you from learning HOW to think Quranically. It is so powerful, it should come across in any language in which it has been well translated, that is, a translation as close as possible to the original, but making sense (not a literal, word-by-word) or a wordy interpretation for each sign rather than a translation. In reading it, dialogue with it by asking yourself: What is the purpose of this passage? Do I understand what is being said? When I read these signs, I work on the text, take it apart, predict it, test it. It is a very difficult process, very labor intensive. This is close reading. What's worth reading is worth reading well.

Write out a part in your own words in order to better understand it, nc of course, to try to compete with it. Ask yourself if you can reformulate it, elaborate on it and give an example. Speak about it. To communicate well, you need to know your audience and what it is that you want to say. In order for listening (hearing) to be effective, it must be active.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to think Quranically in regard to there being no compulsion in the way of life (*din*).

I studied the signs as a way to begin to think Quranically. (Since you are in a Quranic Studies class, your goal should be to think Quranically.)

I was able to ask questions.

I engaged myself in lectures and discussions by asking questions.

By asking questions, I realized that I discovered what I did and did not know.

EPILOGUE: DHU AL-HIJJA: THE MESSENGER VISITS THE FAIRS AND THE ASSEMBLINGS OF PILGRIMS

The time of pilgrimage alone afforded Muhammad a wider field. That interval of universal amnesty was turned (as it had been before) to careful account in visiting and exhorting the various tribes that flocked to Makkah and the adjacent fiars. Thus the Prophet used to visit the great assemblages at Ukaz and other places, as well as the pilgrim encampments at Makkah and Mina. On these occasions he warned his countrymen against idolatry, invited them to the worship and service of the true God, and promised them not only Paradise hereafter, but prosperity and dominion here on earth, if they would believe.

No one responded to his call. Abu Lahab would dog his crying aloud: Believe him not, he is a lying renegade!

The strangers, too, would reply to Muhammad in taunting words as these: Your own kindred and people should know you best. Why have they have cast you off? So the Prophet, dispirited and grieved, would look upwards and make complaint: O Lord, if You will, it would not be thus!

Al-Wahidi says that Muhammad frequented the three great fairs in the neighborhood every year. There is some foreshadowing of the victories of Islam in his supposed address. This was the alleged drift: O people Say, there is no god but God. You will be benefitted thereby. You will gain the rule of all Arabia, and of the foreign lands, and when you die you will reign as kings in Paradise. There would be numerous Christians and Jews at the fairs, though they did not, of course, attend the Makkan pilgrimage.

And behind him there followed a squint-eyed man, fat, having flowing locks on both sides, and clothed in raiment of fine Aden stuff. And when Muhammad had finished his preaching, this man would begin to address them, saying: This fellow's only object is to draw you away from your gods and jinn, to his fancied revelation wherefore follow him not, neither listen unto him. And who should this be but his uncle Abu Lahab.[7]

The plain fact is that the Quraysh elders did not for an instant believe that Muhammad, whom they knew very well, was a sorcerer or a liar, as they alleged. Their allegations were simply propaganda tools aimed at misleading people. The Quraysh elders recognized that the truth Muhammad preached would do away with all their privileges; privileges that relied on deception and false values. On

one occasion the Quraysh elders held a conference on how to counter the effects of what the Prophet said to people, and how to turn pilgrims from other tribes away from him. It is useful to quote this again here. Al-Walid ibn al-Mughayrah, a distinguished figure among the Quraysh chaired that conference:

In his opening address, al-Walid said: Now that the pilgrimage season is approaching, people will start arriving from all over the place. They must have heard about your friend [meaning the Prophet]. So you had better agree what to say when you are asked about him. We must guard against having too many opinions, particularly if they are mutually contradictory.

When his audience asked his advice as to what they should say, he preferred to listen to their suggestions first. What concerned al-Walid most was that the opinion they would come out with should take account of the fact that Muhammad was asking people to listen to the Quran, God's message, expressed in beautiful language and a powerful style. The description they would attach to Muhammad should also account for his persuasive, eloquent argument.

Descriptions like 'fortune-teller', 'madman', 'poet' and 'magician' were proposed. None was considered convincing by al-Walid, who pointed out weaknesses in each, one after the other. He told his people that what Muhammad said was nothing like what was said by such men. When nobody could suggest anything more plausible, they asked al-Walid if he had a better suggestion.

He said: What Muhammad says is certainly beautiful. It is like a date tree with solid roots and rich fruit. Every one of these suggestions you have made is bound to he recognized as false. The least disputable one is to claim that he is a magician who repeats magic words which make a man fall out with his father, mother, wife and clan.

They all approved of al-Walid's suggestion and set about preparing their propaganda campaign to make the pilgrims wary of Muhammad and unwilling to meet him.

Such was the scheming of the Quraysh elders and such was their agreed strategy whereby they would accuse the Prophet of sorcery and lying. They said this deliberately even though they knew it was all a lie. They were fully aware that Muhammad was neither a sorcerer nor a liar.

APPENDIX 1: CORRELATION BETWEEN THE PRESENT ORDER OF CHAPTERS IN THE QURAN AND THEIR CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

1 = 96
2 = 68
3 = 73
4 = 74
5 = 1
6 = 111
7 = 81
8 = 87
9 = 92
10 = 89
11 = 93
12 = 94
13 = 103
14 = 100
15 = 108
16 = 102
17 = 107
18 = 109
19 = 105
20 = 113
21 = 114
22 = 112
23 = 53
24 = 80
25 = 97
26 = 91
27 = 85
28 =95
29 = 106
30 = 101
31 = 75
32 = 104
33 = 77
34 = 50
35 = 90
36 = 86
37 = 54
38 = 38
39 = 7
40 = 72
41 = 36
42 = 25
43 = 35
44 = 19
45 = 20
46 = 56
47 = 26
48 = 27
49 = 28
50 = 17
51 = 10
52 = 11
53 = 12
54 = 15
55 = 6
56 = 37
57 = 31
57 = 34
59 = 39
60 = 40
61 = 41
62 = 42
63 = 43
64 = 44
65 = 45
66 = 46
67 = 51
68 = 88
69 = 18
70 = 16
71 = 71
72 = 14
73 = 21
74 = 23
75 = 32
76 = 52
77 = 67
78 = 69
79 = 70
80 = 78
81 = 79
82 = 82
83 = 84
84 = 30
85 = 29
86 = 83
87 = 2
88 = 8
89 = 3
90 = 33
91 = 60
92 = 4
93 = 99
94 = 57
95 = 47
96 = 13
97 = 55
98 = 76
99 = 65
100 = 78
101 = 59
102 = 24
103 = 22
104 = 63
105 = 58
106 = 49
107 = 66
108 = 64
109 = 61
110 = 62
111 = 48
112 = 5
113 = 9
114 = 110

NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION TO QURANIC THINKING BY HASHIM KAMALI

1. The rough equation that earlier Muslim scholars drew between the Islamic and Western conceptions of reason tended to be oblivious of the categories of reason and the Western critique of reason that divided it into "instrumental reason, critical reason, functional reason, abstract reason, imperialist reason, decentering reason" and the like. For details see Abdelwahab M. Elmessiri, "Features of the New Islamic Discourse," a Cairo conference paper, 1997: http:// www.21stcenturytrust.org/messiri.doc.

2. Some commentators have distinguished a total of 30 expressions that revolve around thinking over the *ayat*. See Abu Bakr al-Razi, *Tafsir al-Kabir* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1985), II, 222f.

3. Cf Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-'Ilm fi'l-Quran al-Karim* (Cairo: Maktaba Wahba, 1416/1996), 36.

4. Al-Isfahani, *Mufradat Alfaz al-Qur'an*, under "*Fikr*".

5. Cf., Karim Douglas Crow, "Islam and Reason" in *Al-Shajarah*, vol. 8, (2003),120-1.

6. Abbas Mahmud, "al-Aqqad, Al-Tafkir Faridah Islamiyyah" (Thinking is an Islamic Obligation) quoted in Jamal Badi and Mustapha Tajdin, *Creative Thinking: An Islamic Perspective*, 2nd edn. (Kuala Lumpur: International Islamic University Malaysia, 2005), 6.

7. Cf. al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-'Ilm*, 41-45 quoting ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's *Miftah Dar al-Sa'ada*, and 'Aqqad's book entitled *al-Tafkir Faridah Islamiyya* (Beirut: al-Matba'a al-'Asriyya, 1992).

8. Cf. al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-Ilm*, 200.

9. Cf .Ibid., 202.

10. Al-Raghib al-Isfahani, *Mufradat Alfaz al-Quran* (Beirut: Dar al-Shamiyya, 1383/1964), 249.

11. Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i, *al-Mizan fi-Tafsir al-Quran* (Beirut al-Mu'assasa al-'Alami, 1383/1964) II, 395.

12. Ala uddin al-Mattagi al-Hindi, *Kanz al-Ummah fi Sunan al-Aqwal wa'l-Af'a* (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risalah, 1383/1981), hadith no. 5873.

13. Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali, *Risalat al-Radd 'ala al-Laduniyya*, ed. 'Abd Allah Riyad Mustafa, (Damascus: Dar al-Hikma, 1986), 241.

14. CE Ahmad Fu'ad al-Ahwani, *al-Tarbiyah fi'l-Islam* (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif bi-Misr, 1968), 227-228.

15. Cf. Aziz al-Azmeh, *Arabic Thought and Islamic Societies* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 109.

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(18. Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Lahore: Shah Muhammad Ashraf, reprint 1982), 127.

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21. See for details Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, *What's Right with Islam is What's Right with America* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2004), 4-5.

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35. Cf., Al-Ahwani, *al-Tarbiyah fi'l-Islam*, 189.

36. Mohammad Hashim Kamali is Professor of Islamic Law and jurisprudence at the International Islamic University Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur. "Reading the Signs," Center for Islam and Science. Gale Group, 2006.

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2. Related by al-Bukhari and Muslim.
3. Ali Shariati, *Fatima is Fatima*.
4. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Science and Civilization in Islam*.
5. Ibid.
6. See Introduction.
7. See Ibn Hisham.

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Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Year 9

Laleh Bakhtiar

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in the Life of Prophet Muhammad

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THE YEAR 9 OF THE REVELATION
MUHARRAM 1-DHU AL-HIJJA 30, 5 BH
SEPTEMBER 8, 617-AUGUST 28, 618 CE

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PREFACE

THE CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STUDIES TEXTBOOK SERIES

There are thirty books in this series. Books entitled *Book Year 1* to *Book Year 24* consist of one book for each year of the revelation. The chapters' or sections' signs (*ayat*) are presented according to the 558 *ruku* or sections of the 114 chapters of the Quran. They each include the relevant chapter (*surah*) or chapters (when they are short) or sections, *ruku* (when there are multiple sections in a particular chapter) in chronological order. The chapters are numbered according to the chronological order of the Quranic chapters provided by al-Azhar University as the officially accepted order of revelation. Each section (*ruku*) is followed by a commentary by one of the well-known commentators.

Book Year 9, the present volume, covers events from Muharram 1-Dhu al-Hijja 30, 5 BH/September 8, 617 CE-August 28, 618 CE.

Books 25-28 are devoted to the Quranic stories of all other Prophets and Messengers in order of their dates. *Book 25: Adam, Cain and Abel, Enoch (Idris), Noah, Hud and the People of Aad; Saleh and the People of Thamud; Book 26: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Jacob (Israel), Joseph and Job; Book 27: Moses, Aaron, Children of Jacob (Israel), Jethro (Shuayb), Joshua, Khidr and Samuel; Book 28: David, Solomon, Elijah (Ilyas), Elisha (Alyasa), Jonah (Younis), Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl), Ezra (Uzayr), Dhul Qarnayn (Cyrus the Great or Alexander the Great), Luqman, Zechariah, John the Baptist (Yahya), Mary and Jesus.* The last two are: *Book 29: The Life of Prophet Muhammad from Birth to the Revelation* and *Book 30: Teacher's Manual.* The last, *Book 30,* has been prepared for the teacher's Lesson Plans.

At the beginning of each lesson, there is an exercise in critical thinking skills. These consist of one of the following: **The Nine Intellectual Standards**, **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** and **The Seven Moral Traits**. The Eight Elements contain thirty-five strategies. However there is no specific order as to how they should be learned and incorporated into our thinking process.

Once we understand the critical thinking skills and then apply them to the signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. Once the skills as presented in the Quranic message are put into practice with the grace of God, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behavior.

Each lesson is followed by questions for classroom discussion or for dialogue. At the end of each lesson there is an assessment/assignment for students to use while they are developing critical thinking skills as they hopefully learn HOW the Quran teaches critical thinking.

SOURCES

The sources for the history include the works of Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hashim, Waqidi, Ibn Sad and commentaries by Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn, Tustari and Sayyid Qutb. The sources for the commentaries of Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn and Tustari have been used with the permission of the publisher, the Royal Institute of Ahl al-Bayt in Jordan. They are available on their website www.altafsir.com.

The inclusion of excerpted commentaries (tafsir) by Sayyid Qutb's In the Shade of the Quran (available online) in this Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series is because Sayyid Qutb is considered by some extremist groups as their intellectual source. By including excerpts from his eighteen volume Quranic commentary, extremists cannot disclaim the importance of learning critical thinking as this series is to help young adults learn HOW to think using self-realization (tahqiq) and critical thinking (furqan) skills taught by the Quran. This in order to arm young adults with the ability to choose reason over any irrational extremist ideology that is presented to them.

TERMINOLOGY

All Quranic signs are translations from The Sublime Quran. For the Muslim, the Quran is the Word (Logos) of God. It is this Word of God that has inspired artists, artisans, poets, philosophers and writers, those who had been the exponents of Islamic culture and civilization for almost 1500 years. Yesterday and today's Muslim wants to know more about each Word that God chose for His revelation through the Quran. This realization, in turn, prompted the translation of The Sublime Quran, an attempt to give the sense of unity within the revelation to a non-Arabic speaking reader.

There are several points to note about the terminology used in the translation of the Quranic text and the commentaries.

1. The blessed Prophet did not bring a new religion; he came to confirm what was right in the messages of the previous Prophets. Does this translation speak to the universality of the Quran? The Quran tells the Prophet, the mercy to all of humanity, to speak to people in their own language. Following his example, in addition to the translation being unbounded by time, in several sensitive cases, the word chosen to translate an Arabic word is also of a universal or inclusive rather than a particular or exclusive nature. This adds to the broadening of the perspective and scope of the Quran so that it becomes inclusive rather than exclusive to one particular group of people. In other words, in this way a larger audience can relate to its message.

2. The actual word "Islam" comes from the verb, "to submit" (*aslama*), submission (*sallama*), and ones who submit (*muslimun*). The Quran refers to itself (the Quran) from the very beginning of the revelation (68:35).

3. As previously indicated, the four books (Book 25, Book 26, Book 27 and Book 28) are the stories of the other Prophets and Messengers mentioned in the Quran. While these stories do have lessons to be learned by the Prophet

and those who heard the revelations as well as for us today, they do not refer directly to Prophet Muhammad and his prophethood following the beginning of the revelation. What remains in these books of the Quranic signs in the 24 years of the chronological Quran relate directly to him, what he did and what he was told to say. This allows us to understand his life directly from the Quranic message, the Quranic Sunnah, without any interruption of the stories about previous Prophets and Messengers.

4. Most English translations of the Quran refer to the "Children of Israel." The word "Israel" when used in the Quran refers to Jacob, the patriarch of the children who followed him such as Joseph. Therefore, it should be the "Children of Jacob" as it appears in these texts.

5. The words "*kufr*" and "*kafir*" have been translated here as "ingratitude" and "ungrateful" where the context allows. This is the first meaning of the word and many of us in our lifetime have met Muslims who are "ungrateful." It is the ungrateful Muslims who practice intolerance by declaring anyone who says: Peace be upon you (*as-salam alaykum*) as a non-believer (with what is called *takfir*). In those cases, it would not be suitable to call them "unbelievers" or "infidels," but it is clearly appropriate to refer to them as being "ungrateful" and this would include the early Quraysh, ungrateful for God's revelation and prophethood of Muhammad, who ridiculed the Prophet and fought against the Quranic message of love, forgiveness and peace.

6. Yet another example of the use of inclusive language in an attempt to speak to people in their own language, is the use of God instead of Allah. Many English speaking Muslims, as well as many of the English translations of the Quran to date, use Allah when speaking English instead of God. The intention on the part of the speaker is to maintain a sense of piety. They feel that using Allah in English moves them in that direction. Many even claim that the word Allah cannot be translated.

However well-intentioned a person may be, when speaking English, the use of the word Allah instead of God, first of all, does not follow the Quranic verse that tells the Prophet to speak to people in their own language. Subsequently, it does not follow the Sunnah of the Prophet who did speak to people in their own language.

In addition, it creates a divide between Muslims who use the word and the English speaking people of various faiths to whom they are speaking. In effect, it creates the illusion that there is more than One God—Allah and God. The response of the English speaking person of another faith is to say: I do not understand your religion; you have a different God than I do and you call Him Allah.

It needs to be clearly explained to English speaking Muslims that, unlike what they may feel, they do not have a monopoly on the word Allah. Arabic speaking Christians and Arabic speaking Jews also refer to God as Allah. The Old Testament and New Testament, when translated into Arabic, use Allah for God.

English speaking Muslims, therefore, need to recall the message of the Quran that God is One (tawhid). In addition, the Prophet did not bring a new religion but confirmed what was correct in the messages of previous Prophets, namely, that God is One. Finally, they need to follow the example of the Prophet, as the Quran says he is the model or example to be followed, by speaking to people in their own language.

7. The Arabic language, much like old English, has the second person singular (masculine: anta (where the verb ends in *ka*). The English equivalent is the subject: "thou" or the object: "thee" or the possessive: "thy." As these are no longer in common usage in English, wherever the original Arabic uses one of these terms, the word "**you**" or "**your**" appear in bold font so that the reader knows the original was the second person singular. When the Quran is speaking directly to the Prophet, it uses the pronoun "thee" or "thou" so it is an important distinction to make.

Using you (second person plural) is done to help English speaking readers, recognizing that using the second person plural pronoun you (masculine: *antum* where the verb ends in masculine: *kum*) for God is to intimate that God is plural, the only sin in the Quran that is unforgivable. By putting the pronoun **you** in bold font indicates the true intention.

8. For the Arabic word "ayah," the English word used in these texts is "sign" rather than the Biblical term, "verse."

9. Several of the signs were abrogated over time. However the indication of a sign being abrogated was done after the complete revelation of the Quran. Whether or not a sign was later abrogated does not change the fact that the first Muslims who listened to the Quran, heard the signs that may have later been said to have been abrogated and that a hafez of the Quran recites all the signs as they appear in the original Arabic revealed to the Prophet. Whatever signs scholars later determined to be abrogated are still part of the Quran and, therefore, are not relevant to learning to be a Quranic critical thinker, learning HOW to think.

10. The first number that appears when the Quranic Chapters begin refers to the chapter number in the chronological order of the revelation so that Quranic Chapter 110 which was the last to be revealed is number 114 in the chronological order.

11. It is to be noted that whenever the name of Muhammad, Prophet Muhammad or the Prophet are used, one may say a silent prayer of blessings for him.

CRITICAL THINKING• COMPONENT

Quranic critical thinking (furqan, discernment) is a process that analyzes how we think. It is a 3-step process: **I**: Quranic critical thinkers apply the **Nine Intellectual Standards** (logic, being definitive, connected, appropriate, have worthiness, include numerous viewpoints, have right judgment, clarity, being fair and just) to: **II: The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** (point of view, purpose, questions, information, inferences, concepts, assumptions, im-

plications): in order to develop: **III: The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** (belief in One God (tawhid), God-consciousness (taqwa), virtuous conduct (birr) or integrity through moral discipline, empowering constancy ('azm) and courage, persevering in goodness (sabara), love (hubb) or empathic altruism (ihsan) and being fair and just (rashad). The signs (ayat) in each section (ruku) teach any or every one of the **Nine Intellectual Standards** or any and every one of the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or any or every one of the **Seven Quranic Moral Traits.**

This is the key to critical thinking. We do not learn "what" to think, but, rather, "how" to think. Using the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** as an example, critical thinking can be summarized in the following sentence: Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** and consequences. We use **concepts,** ideas and theories to **interpret information** (data, facts and experiences) in order to **answer questions,** solve problems, and resolve issues.

The point of view in all cases is that of the Quranic message and the various individuals and groups that it addresses as this series is a course in Quranic Studies as well as a course in the chronological history of the life of the blessed Prophet (sira). Each student is encouraged to come up with his or her own questions and responses to those questions in order to learn how to become the Quranic critical thinker as the Quranic teaches us HOW to think.

It is important to note that there is no correct or incorrect answer. The important point is to go through the process with as many of the sections as one is able to do. Little by little, this will help each student or reader to develop into critical thinkers or "discerners" of the Quranic message creating a bond between them and the Quranic message.

Once we learn to analyze signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. It is important to note that the order of **The Nine Intellectual Standards** or **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or **The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** is not important. With the grace of God, once all are present, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behaviors.

THE NINE INTELLECTUAL STANDARDS

1. LOGIC (REASONABLE: 'AQALA, 'AQL)
2. DEFINITIVENESS (TO BE PRECISE: MUHKAMA)
3. CONNECTEDNESS (CONTAINING COMPLEXITIES AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS: (MUQTARIN)
4. APPROPRIATENESS (TO MAKE RELEVANT: SADID)
5. WORTHINESS (FOCUSING ON THE IMPORTANT, NOT TRIVIAL,

TO BE SIGNIFICANT: AHL)
6. NUMEROUS OR MULTIPLE VIEWPOINTS: 'DHARA'A)
7. RIGHT JUDGMENT (RUSHD)
8. CLARITY (UNDERSTANDABLE, TO BE CLEAR: TABAYYANA)
9. BEING FAIR AND JUST ('AQL, RIGHT-MINDED (RASHAD))

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES

1. EMBODYING A POINT OF VIEW, FRAME OF REFERENCE, PERSPECTIVE (RECOLLECT, BEAR IN MIND, TAKE FOR GRANTED: TADHAKKUR)
- THINKING INDEPENDENTLY
- DEVELOPING INSIGHT INTO EGO-CENTRICITY OR SOCIO-CENTRICITY
- EXPLORING THOUGHTS UNDERLYING FEELINGS AND FEELINGS UNDERLYING THOUGHTS
- DEVELOPING INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY

2. GENERATING A PURPOSE, AIM, GOAL, OBJECTIVE: (CONSIDER: RA'A)
- CLARIFYING ISSUES OR CONCLUSIONS
- CLARIFYING AND ANALYZING THE MEANINGS OF WORDS OR PHRASES
- READING CRITICALLY: CLARIFYING OR DISCERNING THE SACRED TEXT
- LISTENING CRITICALLY: THE ART OF SILENT DIALOGUE

3. RAISING QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, ISSUES: (REFLECT: TAFAKKARA)
- PRACTICING DISCUSSION: CLARIFYING AND QUESTIONING INTERPRETATIONS
- REASONING DIALOGICALLY: COMPARING INTERPRETATIONS
- REASONING DIALECTICALLY: EVALUATING INTERPRETATIONS KNOWLEDGE, WISDOM
- DEEP QUESTIONING

4. USING INFORMATION, DATA, FACTS, OBSERVATIONS, EXPERIENCES, REASONED JUDGMENTS (EVIDENCE: BASIRAH)
- DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION: CLARIFYING VALUES AND STANDARDS
- ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ACTIONS
- DISTINGUISHING RELEVANT FROM IRRELEVANT INFORMATION
- GIVING REASONS AND EVALUATING EVIDENCE

5. MAKING INTERPRETATIONS, INFERENCES, CONCLUSION, SOLUTIONS (UNDERSTANDING: TABASSUR)
- ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ARGUMENTS AND INTERPRETATIONS
- MAKING PLAUSIBLE INFERENCES OR INTERPRETATIONS
- RECOGNIZING CONTRADICTIONS
- NOTING SIGNIFICANT SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

6. UTILIZING CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS, PRINCIPLES, MODELS AND VOCABULARY (RECALL: IDHDHAKARA)
- COMPARING ANALOGOUS SITUATIONS: REFRAMING INSIGHTS TO NEW CONTEXTS

DEVELOPING ONE'S PERSPECTIVE: CREATING OR EXPLORING ARGUMENTS
MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS
COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE
THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING
7. MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PREPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED (OPINIONS: ZUNUN)
8. GENERATING IMPLICATIONS, CONSEQUENCES (PONDER, EVALUATE: TADABBUR)
GENERATING OR ASSESSING SOLUTIONS
EXPLORING IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES IN DETAIL

1. Embodying a **Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective** (Recollect, Bear in Mind, Take to Heart (*tadhakkur*)):Whenever we think, we think within a point of view. What is the Quranic point of view in these signs? Does the Quran follow universal intellectual values of clarity, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, logic, fairness?

2. Generating a **Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective** (Consider (*ra'a*)): My purpose in addressing the Quranic purpose in these signs is . . .? Know exactly what you are after. Make sure you are not operating with a hidden agenda and that your announced and real purposes are the same. Whenever we think, we think for a purpose. What is the Quran's fundamental purpose in revealing these signs? Are there multiple points of view?

3. Raising **Questions, Problems, Issues** (Reflect (*tafakkara*)): What is the key question I am trying to answer. State the question as clearly and precisely as you can. Details are very important.

4. Using **Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments** (Evidence (*basirah*)): Actively seek the information most relevant to the question. Include in that information options for action, both short-term and long-term. We use experiences, facts and data that the Quran gives us. What information does the Quran give in these signs? What information do I need to answer my question?

5. Making **Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusions, Solutions** (Understanding (*tabassur*)): After reasoning (discerning) the above points, decide what the best answer (conclusion) to the question is. What inferences, judgments or conclusions do these signs make? What are my most fundamental inferences or conclusions based on these Quranic signs?

6. Utilizing **Concepts, Theories, Definitions, Axioms, Laws, Prin-**

ciples, Models, Vocabulary (Recall (*idhdhakara*)): The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are ... ? Figure out all significant ideas needed to understand and answer your question. You may need to analyze these concepts. Use a good dictionary. Inferences or conclusions are based on Quranic concepts and theories. What is the most basic concept in my question? What Quranic terms have I learned?

7. Making **Assumptions, Presuppositions, Taking for Granted** (Opinions (*zunun*)): Some important assumptions I am using in my thinking are ... ? Figure out what you are taking for granted. Watch out for self-serving or unjustified assumptions. The Quranic point of view is based on some assumptions. What assumptions is the Quran using in its reasoning? What assumptions am I using in my reasoning from the Quranic revelation?

8. Generating **Implications, Consequences** (Ponder (*tadabbur*)): Evaluate options. Take into account the advantages and disadvantages of possible decisions before acting? What consequences are likely to follow from this or that decision? The Quranic assumptions and my assumptions lead to implications and consequences. What are the implications of the Quranic reasoning? What are the implications of my reasoning? Am I correct in understanding the Quranic implications?

THE SEVEN QURANIC MORAL TRAITS

1. BELIEF IN ONE GOD (TAWHID)
2. GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (TAQWA)
3. VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE (MORALLY OBLIGATED: QANATA, GOODNESS, BIRR)
4. EMPOWERING CONSTANCY, COURAGE (AZM)
5. PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS (STEADFAST: SABARA)
6. EMPATHIC ALTRUISM (LOVE, MERCY, COMPASSION: HUBB)
7. FAIRNESS (NOT SELF-SERVING OR EGO-CENTRIC: 'AQSATA)

*****

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

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My gratitude also goes to the Center for Critical Thinking and, particularly, the online work done in youtube videos and other works by the educator-founders-members of the Critical Thinking Community, namely, the late Dr. Richard Paul and his wife and constant collaborator, Dr. Linda Elder. All indications of • throughout the text refers to quotes or paraphrases from their excellent work as part of the Critical Thinking Community, www.criticalthinking.org. My attempt has been for all the quotes and paraphrases used here to follow fair copyright use.

Whereas Drs. Paul and Elder may not have used their work in religious educational settings, due to the separation of church and state in the educating of American students, learning from their works it became clear that their teachings can help Muslim students, as well, if their method is presented through the content of the Quran. If Muslim students come to understand that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking, that is, discernment (furqan), HOW to think, they will be armed with the intellectual skills they need to confront Islamic extremism.

One of the main scholars that Islamic extremists use in their propaganda is Seyyed Qutb. In order to further arm Muslim students for any confrontation they may have with Islamic extremists who would quote that their ideas come from Seyyed Qutb, I have used his Quranic commentary, In the Shade of the Quran, in Chapter I of this work. Students will learn how, contrary to what they may be told or taught, in many cases, Seyyed Qutb's commentary (indicated by °) speaks of and describes the way that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking and Islamic extremists cannot say that I have left out their scholars.

Last, but certainly not least, I wish to thank Kazi Publications and its founder, Liaquat Ali, for his constant support and encouragement to forge new areas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqli*) will be passed to young students as they learn of a Muslim world deeply entrenched in Islamic narrative sciences (*al-naqli*).

INTRODUCTION
READING THE SIGNS: A QURANIC PERSPECTIVE ON THINKING
BY MOHAMMAD HASHIM KAMALI

The Islamic notion of *aql* (intellect) embraces the faith dimension of knowledge that is also informed by ethical values. The prevailing reading of the Quran on rationality consists of a coalition of faith and reason which is also cognizant of the metaphysical aspect of reality and the limits, therefore, of human reason. This may be said to be a dividing line between the Islamic and Western conceptions of rationality, especially in its post-Enlightenment context.

Thus, it is not accurate to draw a direct parallel between them, as was the case in the Islamic discourse of the colonial period wherein many Muslim writers greatly admired the Western conception of rationality. The twentieth century Islamic discourse has shown awareness of that difference as it began to comprehend the subtleties inherent in the Western lexicon on rationality and its cultural overtones.[1]

THE DIVINE SIGNS (*AYAT*)

The Quran teaches an essential doctrine of the *ayat* (God's signs in the universe) functioning as pointers to the providential purpose at all levels of creation. Thus the Quran makes frequent references such as 'signs for a people who understand—exercise their intellect'. This evidential role of the divine signs entails an accompanying demand placed upon humans to engage in a rational understanding of the signs and draw conclusions on the discovery of truth and correct guidance.

The human reception of the signs, thus, depends ultimately upon the integrity of reason, without which humans would be incapable neither of comprehending the signs nor of responding to their message. The more abundant is an individual's native endowment of reason, the greater is the possibility for him or her to attain a larger magnitude of understanding and a higher level of response.

The nexus between faith and reason thus constitutes the hallmark of intelligent Islamic spirituality, wherein human intellect and emotions are guided toward harmony with one another. The Quran repeatedly provokes its reciters to think about the signs of God in the universe and within themselves, to understand God's illustrious presence in them, and ultimately to vindicate the truth. The word *ayah* and its plural *ayat* occur in the Quran over 400 times, although the whole of the Quran introduces itself as a collection of *ayat*. To quote the Quran: *We will cause them to see Our signs on the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is The Truth.* (41:53)

And, *On the earth are signs, for the ones that are certain and in yourselves. Will you not, then, perceive?* (51:20-51:21)

God reveals the truth in a variety of ways, some explicit and others by allusion, the latter mainly through the modality of the signs, in order to provoke and engage the human intellect. The signs of God cannot be readjust off the face of the signs but require thinking and reflection. This is indicated in the phrase: *We will cause them to see Our signs* ... which suggests that the signs may not be instantaneously visible to the naked eye. The whole concept of signs seeks to forge a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* (38:29) A sign is also a portent and allusion to something other than itself and should not therefore be seen as the final message and purpose of the revelation containing it.

Approximately 750 verses, or nearly one-eighth of the Quran, exhort the readers to study nature, history, the Quran itself, and humanity at large. The text of the Quran employs a range of expressions in its appeal to those who listen (*yasma'un*), those who think (*yatafakkarun*), those who reflect (*yatadabbarun*), those who observe (*yanzurun*), those who exercise their intellect (*ya'qilun*), those who take heed and remember (*yatadhakkarun*), those who ask questions (*yas'alun*), those who develop an insight (*yatafaqqahun*), and those who know (*ya'lamun*).[2]

These and their derivatives (mostly occurring in the active verbal form) consist essentially of open invocations and encouragement to thinking that is not limited by a methodology or framework. *Meditate they not, then, on the Quran* (*afala yatadabbarun al-Qur'an*) (47:24) *Tadabbur* means concentrated and goal-oriented thinking provoked by the challenge to find something new or to solve a difficult problem.

Quranic references to thinking and the exercise of intellect occur in conjunction with basically five major themes: Belief in the Oneness and generosity of God (*tawhid*); reflection on the Quran; the human being and the universe; historical precedent; and thinking itself.

References to *aql* (intellect) and its derivatives occur on 49 occasions in the text. The typical Quranic expression, *ulu'l-albab* (those who possess vision and understanding), and its synonym, *ulu'l-nuha* (people endowed with intellectual abilities) occur 33 times in the text. Such expressions are frequently juxtaposed with the exposition of signs, such as in the sign: *Thus, God makes manifest His signs to you so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (2:242) or in the sign: *Surely, We made manifest the signs to you so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (57:17). Repeated references to pondering over the signs are variously nuanced such that they embrace within their fold the widest spectrum of people who may be endowed with different intellectual abilities and endowments.[3]

Al-Isfahani defines thought (*al-fikr*) as the power of the mind that facil-

itates access to knowledge (*'ilm*). Thinking (*al-tafakkur*) is the movement of that power which is driven by the intellect (*al-'aql*), and this can only occur when an initial image of the subject is attainable in the mind of the thinker. Thinking cannot, therefore, proceed over something of which no image exists in the mind. This can be said of the self of God, for example, as we have no image on which to focus our thought.[4]

The human being can only think over the attributes of God through the observation of His signs. Broadly speaking, thinking proceeds over the whole of the created universe without any exception; indeed, the Quran repeatedly invites such in respect to both the physical and abstract aspects of reality, both in the present and in regards to bygone history that is only perceived by the intellect rather than sense perception. Often the Quran gives examples, parables, and narratives of other nations, and then follows them with the reminder, usually addressed to the Prophet, to recount the narratives of the past so that the people may think and reflect over them:

And recount to them the tiding of him to whom We gave Our signs. (7:175)

And there are the parables that We propound for humanity so that perhaps they will reflect. (59:21)

Truly, in that are certainly signs for a folk who reflect. (30:21)

A hierarchy of five perceptive-cognitive functions is also suggested, including and extending through hearing, sight, thinking, dhikr remembrance, and certainty.[5]

Given such a scale of intensified perceptive understanding, the Quran propounds the notion of *ulul'l-albab*, the thoughtful individuals who are possessed of proper understanding and response. *'Aql* is thus tied to the cognitive dimension of faith.

Significantly, the very term for reason and intelligence in Arabic, *al-'aql*, has at the core of its basic meaning the practical idea of "restraining" and "binding," that is, of holding one's self back from blameworthy conduct—being an interior self-imposed limit. Quranic commentators understand thinking (*tafakkur, tafkir*) as pondering and reflection, which is a mental activity and process, not an outcome.

Thinking (*tafakkur*) is considered as a form of worship of God if it is done with sincerity and good purpose. *'Aql* in its Quranic conception is also one that conceives the truth, and it is always in search of it. This conception of *'aql* precludes one that is rigid, arrogant, and misleading. Some have also drawn the conclusion from the ubiquitous Quranic emphasis on thinking that all Muslims must strive to be thinking individuals.[6]

Al-Qaradawi has quoted Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's (d. 751/1350) own observation as well as some epithetic statements, the latter narrated from other leading figures to the effect that "thinking for an hour is better than worship of many years," and another statement that "thinking for an hour is superior to a whole night of prayer." To this Ibn Qayyim added that "thinking is the

act of the heart whereas worship is the act of one's limbs, and the former is superior to the latter."

The pious caliph Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz (d. 101/718) is similarly quoted: Thinking over the bounties of God is the best form of worship. Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad went so far as to say that: Thinking—*al-tafkir*—is an Islamic obligation. Just as God Most High ordered us to worship Him by performing prayer and fasting, He also ordered us to think in numerous verses and in so many different ways, all of which vindicate thinking as one of the cardinal messages of the Quran.[7]

The Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge espoused with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression *al-tafaqquh fi'l-din*, that is, understands the religion, signifying a rational and inquisitive approach to constructing a Quranic worldview.

Islam, in other words, advises analytical knowledge and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely dogmatic approach. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions: Faith based on detailed analysis (*al-iman al-tafsili*) as opposed to undigested and uncomprehended faith (*al-iman al-ijmali*). The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the religious scholars of all the leading schools of thought. Thus it is declared in a sign: *But a section of people only that they become learned in the way of life and that they warn their folk.* (9:122).

We also note the distinction between thought-based knowledge and transmitted or received knowledge reflected in the twin juristic and hadith-related expressions of knowledge based on understanding (*'ilm al-diraya*), and report-based and transmitted knowledge (*'ilm al-riwaya*). The former is based on understanding and insight (*diraya wa tafaqquh*) and takes priority over the latter. Whereas *'ilm al-riwaya* relies mainly on memory and retention, *'ilm al-diraya* is based on cognition, understanding, and analysis.

Thus, if there are hadith reports, or any factual reports for that matter, which do not stand to reason and understanding, they would be most likely discounted and abandoned, with the exception only of devotional matters (*'ibadat*) which are based on faith and submission more than on rational analysis.

Another feature of the Quranic vision of thinking is indicated in its emphasis on wisdom and good judgment (*hikmah*) which signifies the quality of thinking, its regard for values, and its outcome. Wisdom and good judgment can easily be said to be more important than technical know-how and expertise, as it can guide expert knowledge as to its proper application and the attainment of excellence.

The Quran mentions *hikmah* twenty times, and in about ten of these it is

immediately preceded by the word Book or *kitab*, which is a reference to divine scripture—primarily the Quran, but also other divinely revealed scriptures. The text, thus, says with reference to Jesus: *And He teaches him the Book and wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel.* (3:48) The juxtaposition of *kitab* and *hikmah* is often contextualized by a reference to the sending of prophets who teach the people and guide them with scripture and wisdom (e.g., *wa yu'allimuhum al-kitaba wa'l-hikmata*) as it is said of the Prophet Muhammad: *And teaches you the Book and wisdom* (2:159) and: *Teaches them the Book and wisdom* (62:2 ff); the descendants of Prophet Abraham: *We gave the people of Abraham the Book and wisdom* (4:54); and of Luqman: *We gave Luqman wisdom* (31:12). The holistic, superior, and indivisible value of *hikmah* in the Quran is underscored in one of its signs to the effect that when God bestows wisdom on someone that person is indeed granted an immense source of goodness: *And whomever is given wisdom, then, surely, was given much good and none recollects no doubt but those imbued with intuition.* (2:269).

To mention *hikmah* together with the Book evidently means that the Quran should be read with wisdom and divorcing the one from the other by taking a totally dogmatic approach to the Quran goes against the divine purpose and intention of its revelation. To read the Quran in the light of *hikmah* thus means a comprehensive reading that reaches beyond the obvious meaning of its words to encapsulate the goal and purpose of its message and then also reflection on the ways and means of how its benefits can be realized for the individual and society.[8]

The repeated juxtaposition of the "Book and *Hikmah*" in the Quran led some commentators, such as the Successor, Qatadah ibn Diama al-Sadusi (d.118 H), Ibn Wahhab, the disciple of Imam Malik (d. 179/795), and the Imam al-Shafii (d. 205/820) himself to the somewhat unusual observation that "*hikmah*" is a reference to the Sunna of the Prophet. Many have taken and followed this view; but since the text does not specify such a meaning for *hikmah*, the word should convey its natural and unqualified meaning as I have depicted in this presentation.

Good judgment, insight, balance and avoidance of extremes, the ability to distinguish between truth and falsehood, and procedural accuracy are commonly associated with *hikmah* and *hikmah* as such becomes a dimension of evaluative thinking in. its Quranic idiom. Besides, when the Quran declares that God Most High endowed the Prophets David and Solomon and also the renowned sage Luqman with *hikmah*, it could not have referred to the Sunna of the Prophet Muhammad, as Sunna as such did not exist in those times.

The Quranic usage of *hikmah* reinforces the holistic quality of thinking. *Hikmah* also seeks to forge a close tie between reason and emotion (*'aql wa qalb*) thereby encouraging what is now known as emotional intelligence. This is how the Quran and also the Sunna often deliver their messages, for, unlike

the modern statutory laws and texts, the Quranic guidance, commands, and prohibitions are often espoused with appeals to the heart and mind of their readers.[9]

Al-Isfahani defined *hikmah* as the realization of the truth through knowledge and intellect and it is manifested in the performance of benevolent deeds.[10] According to another definition: Wisdom signifies comprehension of the truth and reality and the ability to avoid corruption in one's quest to attain perfection."[11]

Random House Dictionary of the English Language similarly defines wisdom as: Knowledge of what is true or right coupled with just judgment as to action. Wisdom is thinking informed by the light of the heart that often leads to action and contemplates its consequences in relationship with other relevant factors. This may strike a note with the renowned hadith in which it is declared that: Fearing God is the pinnacle of wisdom (*ra's al-hikmati makhafat Allah*)."[12]

It is presumably for this reason that the great religions of the world have urged the seekers of knowledge to combine it with wisdom. It is wisdom that confers a higher quality on thinking and helps knowledge to be used for the promotion of good giving it meaning and direction.

In an effort to train the individual to enhance his or her quality of thinking, al-Ghazali (d. 505/1111) discusses the two sources of knowledge that Muslim tradition has recognized. One of these is through human teaching and learning (*al-ta'allum al-insani*) and the other through divine teaching (*al-ta'lim al-rabbani*).

The former is externally transmitted from teacher to student, whereas the latter is conveyed by the Universal Intellect which is superior, more intense, and more effective than human teaching. This knowledge is internally acquired either through revelation (*wahy*), which is a prerogative of the Prophets, or it is acquired through meditation, thinking, and reflection.

Al-Ghazali subscribes to the view that the essence of all knowledge is centered in the inner self of the human person in much the same way as growth potential that is vested in the soil and seed, and it is through teaching that the individual's potential is developed.[13] These two aspects of knowledge, that is, the external and the internal, are complementary to one another. This is because no one can possibly teach or learn from any teacher all the sciences, some of which are learned through teaching but the rest inferred by the reflective thought of the individual. It is therefore important that the avenues of learning remain open both through teaching and through inner reflection, thinking, and illumination. This is another way of saying that all knowledge is acquired and developed through the senses, inner reflection and thinking, both of which partake in natural endowment and development through external transmission and teaching.

Al-Ghazali's views on the internal and external sources of knowledge

tended to correspond with those of Ibn Sina (d. 428/1037), but which differed, at least partially, from those of the second/ninth century Ikhwan al-Safa (c. 373/983). All knowledge, according to the latter, is acquired through the senses and none inheres in human nature. Knowledge that is developed through thought and reflection also originate in the senses. The same analysis is extended to the axiomatic knowledge of postulates that are derived and confirmed through the senses. In support of this theory Ikhwan al-Safa have cited the Quranic verse: *And God brought you out from the wombs of your mothers and you know nothing.* (16:78). All knowledge is therefore acquired knowledge, a view which may strike a closer note with some of the modern theories on the subject.[14]

Muslim thought in the middle ages did not admit the ontological distinction between tangible entities that could be sensuously apprehended and entities of a spiritual or subliminal nature. This may be said to be a more sound and realistic view of reality than is allowed for by the modern positivist doctrines of science. Being is manifested at various levels and in several forms, none of which is less real than the other. Arabic thought employed the notions systematized in Stoic theory that divide being into three locations: Verbal utterance, psychic representation, and reality—without this last in any sense having exclusive title to Being.

Al-Farabi (d. 950 CE) took up this view and assimilated psychic representation to the entities of reason. Others rehearsed this division with the addition of a fourth location, that of Scripture. Reality thus had a four-fold manifestation, depending on whether the subject existed immediately in itself or whether its like was graven in the mind (*dhihn*, psyche) composed of sounds, which together indicates the psychic representation, or was manifested in characters standing for sound and speech. All four have a basic characteristic in common which is existence (*wujud, haqiqah*).[15]

The Islamic and Western perceptions of creative and evaluative thinking both recognize this to be a skill that is developed through training and controlled exercise. It is through training and thinking that we adopt new patterns of perceiving reality that we are able to see differently and creatively. It is generally acceded that creative thinking and critical thinking go hand-in-hand and complement one another. Critical thinking means "involving or exercising skilled judgment or observation." Thinking is critical when it evaluates the reasoning behind a decision. Such evaluation must, however, be carried forth in a constructive manner.[16]

The purpose of critical thinking is to achieve understanding, evaluate viewpoints, and solve problems. In general, one's thinking is likely to become critical when concrete learning experiences precede abstract thought.[17] This strikes a parallel note, in its Islamic idiom, with thinking that is espoused with *hikmah*.

The famous yet controverted hadith: The first (being) God created is the intelligence (*awwalu ma khalaqa Allahu al-'aqla*), sparked prolonged discus-

sions among Muslim thinkers over many centuries over the implications of this statement. Among the issues debated was the priority of reason over revelation and the respective role of each in their mutual inter-dependence.

Another issue was whether the disparity among humans in respect of reason also affected the modalities of moral obligation. Some prominent thinkers including Abu Bakr al-Razi (d. 313/925) apparently advocated the primacy of reason over the revelation. This would be properly known as "rationalism," which deems the primacy of reason over revelation. This is different from "rationality" which means treating any issue by using reason without giving reason priority.

SOURCES AND INSTRUMENTS OF KNOWLEDGE

Commenting on the Quranic passage quoted earlier, Muhammad Iqbal observed that the Quran regards both self (*anfus*) and world (*afaq*) as sources of knowledge. God reveals His signs in inner as well as outer experience. The Quran thus opens fresh vistas of knowledge in the domain of our inner experience. Mystic experience and intuition, then, however unusual and abnormal, must now be regarded as perfectly natural and open to scrutiny like other aspects of human experience." But inner experience is only one source of human knowledge. The outer experience in the Quran, Iqbal continues on the same page, unfolds two other sources of knowledge—nature and history, and it is in tapping these sources of knowledge that "the spirit of Islam is seen at its best".

The Quran sees the signs of reality in the sun, the moon, the alternation of day and night, the perpetual changes of the winds, the variety of human colors and tongues, and in fact in the whole of nature as revealed to the sense-perception of man. The Muslim's duty is to reflect on these signs and not to pass by them as if he is deaf and blind *They have hearts with which they understand not. And they have eyes with which they perceive not. And they have ears with which they hear not. Those are like flocks. Nay! They are ones who go astray. Those, they are the ones who are heedless* (7:179), for he who does not see these signs in this life will remain blind to the realities of the life to come. The divine signs are observed through sense-perception using mainly the faculties of hearing, sight, and intellect: *Journey they not through the earth? Have they not hearts with which to be reasonable or ears with which to hear?* (22:46) The emphasis in this sign is on the faculty of reason and understanding, suggesting that not all of our information about nature comes directly from sensation, for if that were the case we would be no different from animals.

Frequent references to sense-perception as the principal mode of receiving the signs show the scientific/experimental import of the Quran. The Quran goes even further to suggest sense perception as the only avenue of knowledge, as the text already reviewed provides: *And God brought you out from*

the wombs of your mothers and you know nothing. And He assigned to you the ability to hear and sight and mind so that perhaps you will give thanks. (16:78) Knowledge of the signs is therefore acquired through the use of these faculties. In another sign, the Quran praises those who listen to the word and follow the best of it: *Those who listen to the saying of the Quran and follow the fairer of it. Those are those whom God guided. And those, they are imbued with intuition.* (or make the best possible interpretation thereof) (39:18). This sign apparently subjects the data of sense-perception to the exercise of intellectual selection. The text also teaches that sense-perception does not perceive all reality: *So I swear an oath by what you perceive and what you perceive not.* (69:37-69:38). Certainty (*yaqin*) may also be beyond the reach of human intellect, as the human mind may be blurred by the variables of time and space. What is deemed certain today may be uncertain tomorrow.

We also note that according to the teachings of the Quran, the universe is dynamic in its origin, finite, and capable of increase. Early Muslim thinkers do not seem to have grasped the Quranic emphasis on inductive reasoning and experimentation. It was indeed a slow realization for Muslim thinkers to note "that the spirit of the Quran was essentially anti-classical". Putting full confidence in Greek reasoning, Muslim thinkers tried to understand the Quran in the light of Greek philosophy, which in the beginning of their careers they had studied with so much enthusiasm.

The substance of Iqbal's analysis on this subject is also upheld by Malik bin Nabi (1905-1973), who understands the creative impulse of the Quran as the motivating force behind the efflorescence of science at a time when Muslim thinkers began to grasp the full impact of the Quran on experimentation and inductive reasoning.[18]

The dynamic conception of the universe in the Quran is also seen by its conception of life as an evolutionary movement in time. History thus constitutes the third source of knowledge in the Quran. It is one of the most essential teachings of the Quran, as Iqbal has further observed, that nations are collectively judged, and suffer for their misdeeds here and now. The Quran thus constantly cites historical instances, and urges upon the reader to reflect on the past and present experiences of humanity: *Customs passed away before you. So journey through the earth; then, look on how had been the Ultimate End of the ones who deny.* (3:137)

If a wound afflicts you, surely, a wound afflicted the folk similar to that. And these are the days We rotate among humanity so that God knows those who believed and takes witnesses to Himself from among you. (3:140)

And: *And of whom We created there is a community that guides with The Truth, and with it, it is just. And those who denied Our signs, We will draw them on gradually from where they will not know.* (7:181-183)

The Quran's interest in history as a source of human knowledge extends farther than mere indication of historical generalizations. "It has given us one

of the most fundamental principles of historical criticism."[19] Since accuracy in recording facts is an indispensable condition of history as a science, accuracy depends ultimately on those who report them. The reporter's personal character is thus an important factor in judging his testimony. The Quran says *O those who believed! If one who disobeys drew near to you with a tiding, then, be clear so that you not light on a folk out of ignorance.* (49:6). It is the application of the principle embodied in this sign to the reporters of the Prophet's traditions out of which were gradually evolved the canons of historical criticism.

A scientific treatment of history, however, requires a wider experience, a greater maturity of practical reason, and a fuller realization of certain basic ideas regarding the nature of life and time. These are in the main three, and taken together they constitute the foundation of Quranic teaching.

(1) The unity of human origin: The Quran states: *He creates you from one soul.* (39:6) And: *O humanity! Be God-conscious of your Lord Who created you from a single soul.* (4:1). But the perception of life as an organic unity is a slow achievement. Islam sowed the germ of this aspiration and it became a Quranic assignment of us to work towards its realization. Notwithstanding the fact that Christianity, long before Islam, brought the message of equality to humanity, the Roman Empire had no more than a general and abstract conception of human unity.

On the other hand, the growth of territorial nationalism in Europe has tended to stifle the broad human element in the art and literature of Europe. European colonialism was also inspired by a self-image of superiority. Europe assumed a superior image that non-European peoples could be freely dominated, exploited, and subjugated.[20] It was quite otherwise with Islam. The impulse of Islam was from the outset to make the idea of human unity a living factor in the Muslim experience that was to be taken towards fuller fruition.

(2) A keen sense of the reality of time, and the concept of life as a continuous movement in time: The Quranic view of the alternation of day and night as a sign of the ultimate Reality which appears in a fresh glory every moment and the tendency in Muslim metaphysics to regard time as objective—all this constituted the intellectual heritage and ideals of Islam.

(3) The merger between religious and secular values: This is a unique feature of Islamic thought which is distinguished by its attempt to bring harmony between them, probably for the first time in history. It was in the state of Madinah that we encounter a clear example where universally proclaimed moral values formed the criteria of political judgment. Political leaders and statesmen were expected to recognize not only the value of efficiency, but also of justice, human dignity, equality, and freedom. In his renowned *Philosophy of History*, Hegel (1770-1831) recognized that the unity between the secular and the spiritual took place in Islamic society and civilization long before it made any impact in the modern West: We must therefore regard (the

reconciliation between the secular and spiritual) as commencing rather in the enormous contrast between the spiritual religious principles, and the barbarian Real World. For spirit as the consciousness of an inner world is, at the commencement, itself still in the abstract form. All that is secular is consequently given over to rudeness and capricious violence. The (Muslim) principle, the enlightenment of the oriental world, is the first to contravene this barbarism and caprice. We find it developing itself later and more rapidly than Christianity; for the latter needed eight centuries to grow into a political form.[21]

The modern West followed the example of the historical Islamic world in demanding that holders of political power operate under a set of moral rules. But as the modern West harmonized the secular and religious only nationally, the international realm was free to operate under the dynamics of power politics and secular rudeness. This failure was a cause of the senseless violence that claimed over 100 million war victims in the twentieth century. Recognition of the danger of the purely secular politics led to the creation of the United Nations, yet even this effort was undermined by political realists who enjoyed a disproportionate sway among the political pundits of Europe and America.

Safi has rightly noted the irony that contemporary Muslim societies have unfortunately followed a similar course in decoupling the secular and the religious and now find themselves entangled in a crisis of legitimacy. Many Muslim regimes are driven by the logic of power and operate outside the realm of moral correctness. It is alarming to see that this decoupling has impacted the religiously inspired movements, which seem to succumb to the logic of power in their readiness to employ amoral--even immoral--strategies in their fight against political corruption and oppression.[22]

OBSTACLES TO CORRECT REASONING

The Quranic emphasis on pondering over the signs is also underscored by a set of guidelines to ensure a correct outcome of reflection and thinking over them. The text thus draws attention to a series of exclusions and factors that stand in the way of the proper functioning of intellect:

(1) Pursuit of caprice (*hawa*) which may consist of love, hatred, pomposity and prejudice that confound impartiality and sound judgment: *Had you considered he who took to himself his own desire as his god and whom God caused to go astray out of a knowledge, sealed over his having the ability to hear and his heart and laid a blindfold on his sight? Who, then, will guide him after God? Will you not, then, recollect?* (45:23)

And if you had followed their desires after what drew near you of the knowledge, there is not for you from God either a protector or a helper. (2:120)

But if they respond not to you, then, know that they only follow their own desires. (28:50)

And: *And obey not him whose heart We made neglectful of Our Remembrance and who followed his own desires and whose affair had been excess.*

(18:28)

The choice is between two alternatives: caprice (*hawa*) and guidance (*huda*); the former evidently renders obscure one's attempt to attain the latter.

(2) Pursuit of conjecture in the face of certitude: And surely conjecture (*al-zann*) avails nothing against the truth (*al-Haqq*). *And most of them follow nothing but opinion. Truly, opinion avails them not against The Truth at all.* (10:36)

And follow up not of what there is not for you knowledge of it. Truly, having the ability to hear and sight and mind, each of those will have been that which is asked. (17:36) Knowledge and truth stand in contradistinction with the pursuit of conjecture. Note that the text says one should not follow conjecture until it is established and elevated to the rank of knowledge. It does not say that one should avoid conjecture altogether. In another place, conjecture occurs side by side with *hawa* or that which they themselves desire: *They follow nothing but opinion and that for which their souls yearn.* (53:23) This is the kind of conjecture or opinion that is meant.

Knowledge is established by sense-perception that often begins with a measure of speculation and doubt but which is affirmed by the light of reason and conviction. Some commentators maintain that the main context for this guideline is religion: Thus it is said that one should not take speculative positions in matters of belief. As for scientific enquiry and pursuit of knowledge, conjecture is neither discouraged nor avoidable.[23]

The ultimate purpose of this engagement is to attain the truth. Once the truth is attained, one should then commit oneself to it and observe it: *And what else is there after The Truth but wandering astray. Where, then, turn you away?* (10:32)

Completed was the Word of your Lord in sincerity and justice. There is no one who changes His Words. (54) (6:115).

(3) Blind imitation of others: The correct exercise of reason in Islam is tied to personal conviction as opposed to indiscriminate following of others, hallowed custom, and precedent. These must be judged in the light of reason and abandoned if found deviant and misleading: The misguided will say, as the Quran provides: *Nay! We will follow whatever we discovered our fathers were following on it —even though their fathers had been not at all reasonable—nor are they truly guided.* (2:170)

And: *Enough is what we found our fathers upon. Even though their fathers had been knowing nothing nor are they truly guided?* (5:104)

This was the response that Prophet Abraham and other great prophets received from their detractors, but the text address them again and again that both you and your ancestors were clearly misguided. *Certainly, We gave Abraham his right judgment before. And We had been ones who know of him when he said to his father and his folk: What are these images to which you be ones who give yourselves up to? They said: We found our fathers as ones who are*

worshippers of them. He said: Certainly, you and your fathers had been in a clear wandering astray.(21:51-21:54)

Forsake those who took to themselves their way of life as a pastime and as a diversion and whom this present life deluded. (6:70)

*Is it that **your** formal prayer commands **you** that we leave what our fathers worship?* (11:87)

As we shall presently elaborate, indiscriminate imitation of others is widely held to be the single most damaging cause of the decline of creative thinking among Muslims.

(4) Oppressive Dictatorship: The Quran takes to task arrogant dictators and those who support them and follow them. Hence the plea of those who say: *Our Lord! Truly, we obeyed our chiefs and our great ones. They caused us to go astray from the way* (33:66) should be of no merit. In a number of other places the text denounces the Pharaoh and Karun for their oppressive ways who misled their people in rejecting the guidance that was conveyed to them. *Pharaoh and his Council but they followed the command of Pharaoh. And the command of Pharaoh was not well-intended.* (11:96)

DECLINE OF CRITICAL THINKING

I shall not retrace well-documented history that Muslim thinkers were pioneers in the creation of new knowledge. It was due to the impact of the Quran that, in contrast to the Greeks who excelled in deductive method of reasoning and logic, Muslim scientists distinguished themselves in inductive and experimental approaches to scientific enquiry. The golden period of Muslim science started around 700 AD and lasted until about 1350 AD. Great thinkers such as Ibn Sina, Jabir ibn Hayyan, Abu Bakr Zakarriya al-Razi, Abu Rayhan al-Biruni, Ibn al-Nafis al-Dimashgi, al-Khawarizmi, and many others have left a rich legacy of contributions to the advancement of sciences in anatomy, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, optics, etc.[24]

After the fourteenth century creative thinking began to decline in the Islamic world due to a variety of factors, including the Mongol invasion and burning of Baghdad, the defeat of the Muslim Arabs in Spain and the continuing crusades, the collapse of the Ottoman caliphate, and the ensuing onslaught of European colonialism. The creative impulse of Islamic thought suffered setbacks as a result. Muslims were also beset with many internal problems including the alienation of philosophers, scientists, and thinkers from the theologians, sectarian controversies, and the prevalence of intellectual conservatism and imitation of past authority (*taqlid*)).

Philosophy and the sciences fell into a rapid decline while more rigid forms of instruction and narrower curricula prevailed. It was argued that orthodoxy was being threatened and that there was a need to restrain thinkers in order to defend religion. The latitude and diversity of discourse that expanded the scope of religious sciences, theology (*kalam*), commentary (*tafsir*), hadith,

and jurisprudence (*fiqh*) gave way to narrower criteria of *kufr*, *bidah*, and *taqlid* and the so-called closing of the door of *ijtihad* (*sadd bab al-ijtihad*).[25]

More recently, a certain abuse of Islamic authority operated by a dogmatic radicalism has exacerbated the decline of creative thought among Muslims. The situation is not helped by the prevalence of passivity in popular culture concerning the dogmatic excesses of these ardent proponents of imitation of past authority (*taqlid*). One of the salient features of this mindset is a certain ignorance of the essential impulse of the Quran on creative thought. Malik bin Nabi put it succinctly that the crisis of a civilization and a society at a critical point of its history "is not the paucity of its material objects but the poverty of its ideas."[26]

WHAT IS *IJTIHAD*?

The Quranic appeal to rational thinking and enquiry is not restrained by the methodology of *ijtihad*. There is, in fact, no clear text on *ijtihad*[27] in the Quran. *Ijtihad* as a concept originates in the hadith of the Prophet and the practice and precedent of companions. The methodology of *ijtihad* which is the basic theme of the science of the sources of law (i.e. *usul al-fiqh*) is itself a product of *ijtihad*. It seems that the Prophet also saw *ijtihad* as a creative impulse rather than engaging in the technicalities of legal reasoning—as the *usul al-fiqh* later developed in abundance. When the Prophet spoke of *ijtihad* or when he approved of its application, he seems to have done so in terms of *ijtihad* qua creative thinking.

One would readily admit that imposing restrictions on thinking, even if it were possible, by cultures and legal traditions could be exaggerated, in which case it would be prone to acquiring negative dimensions. One would not, on the other hand, advocate free thinking that is not limited by some kind of goal-orientation and values. Even the actual process of creative thinking, as earlier noted, is a skill that could be learned and refined by stages to direct it into productive avenues. The liberal tradition of the West tends to impose minimal restrictions on thinking whereas Islam tends to take a more guided approach to creative reasoning. Whereas both the Islamic and Western traditions recognize the authority of reason as a criterion of judgment, the liberal tradition has, unlike Islam, isolated spirituality and faith from the ambit of scientific rationality.

However, the methodology of *ijtihad* was also influenced in the course of time by a variety of factors, including the political climate, the change of caliphate (*khilafah*) to monarchy (*mulk*), Hellenistic thought in relationship to analogy (*qiyas*) and its syllogistic components, and the rift between the religious scholars and ruling authorities.[28]

Usul al-fiqh and its proposed methodology followed a difficult course and became embroiled in technicality that had adverse consequences for *ijtihad*. What is needed now is to recapture the purity of this vital concept, to

make *ijtihad* as our principal instrument for originality and healthy adjustment, but also to revise and reform some aspects of the theory of *ijtihad* itself that are no longer responsive to the prevailing conditions and challenges of our time.

I have elsewhere discussed the theory of *ijtihad* and its related issues and space here does not permit engagement in detail.[29] Yet I conclude this section by suggesting, however briefly, that the conventional theory of *ijtihad* needs to be revised and reformed in respect of the need:

1) to recognize the validity of collective and consultative *ijtihad* (*ijtihad jama'i*) side by side with that of *ijtihad* by individual scholars;

2) to allow experts in other fields such as science, economics, and medicine to carry out *ijtihad* in their respective fields if they are equipped with adequate knowledge of the source evidence of Islam. They may alternatively sit together with, or seek advice from, those learned in *Shariah*.

Ijtihad has in the past been often used as an instrument of diversity and disagreement rather than of unity and consensus. Although disagreement must admittedly be allowed in principle, yet there is a greater need today for unity and consensus. Scholars and learned bodies should not perhaps encourage excessive engagement in diversity of schools and sects but try to find ways that would help to close the gap between them and encourage unity on principles. This may require policy guidelines for different settings and countries, and, if so, that should be reflected in our approaches to *ijtihad*. Certain guidelines may also be provided by thinkers and leaders to stimulate consensus-oriented *ijtihad* within the ranks of the judiciary and legislative assemblies.

Ijtihad has in the past been conceived basically as a legal concept and methodology. Our understanding of the source evidence on *ijtihad* does not specify such a framework for *ijtihad*. Rather, we think of the original conception of *ijtihad* as a problem-solving formula for the problems encountered by individual Muslims and the Muslim community. This would confirm our view of the need to broaden the scope of *ijtihad* to other disciplines beyond the framework of *fiqh* and *usul al-fiqh*.

According to a legal maxim of Islamic jurisprudence, there should be no *ijtihad* in the presence of a clear text of the Quran and Hadith (*la ijtihad ma'al-nass*). This maxim should also be revised. This is because of the possibility that the text in question could now be seen in a different light and given a fresh interpretation in a different context. What we are saying is that the legal text may need to be understood first and that by itself may involve *ijtihad*. Hence *ijtihad* may not be precluded if it could advance a fresh understanding of the text in the first place.

The persistent decline of critical reason among Muslims is due partly to the notion that the exercise of personal judgment and *ijtihad* ceased with the epoch-making works of the legists and imams of the past. Added to this is the prevailing mindset that a Muslim should follow one or the other of the estab-

lished schools of thought and abandon his judgment in favor of interpretations of the earlier centuries whose originators could have no conception of the necessities of the twenty-first century Muslims. Until about 1500 CE, independent *ijtihad* allowed Muslims and Muslim societies to continually adapt in the face of changing societal conditions and new advances in knowledge.

Unfortunately, as Muslim civilization began to weaken about four centuries ago in the face of Western advances, Muslims began to adopt a more conservative stance in an attempt to preserve traditional values and institutions. As a result Muslim thinkers became inclined to view innovation and adaptation negatively. For all the rhetoric and symbolic form of the neo-radicals that tend to dominate the audience of Muslims, the spirit of Islam is often palpably missing from their endeavors, while more than ever *ijtihad* is needed where women, education, and politics are concerned.

ISLAM AND THE WEST

Scientific rationality essentially reduces intelligence to the level of neural chemistry where mental and behavioral phenomena are understood merely as manifestations of physical processes. It tends to deprive us of our noblest dimensions (faith, love, beauty), separates the soul from the body, and the sensory from the intelligible. In the realm of economics, we are merely a producer and consumer of goods and is moved solely by our individual self-interest. This too is opposed to the Islamic viewpoint which also sees in us morality and transcendent faith.

This physicalist analysis of intelligence is now increasingly being seen as conceptually inadequate. The real question is whether one may admit a human dimension which is autonomous and irreducible to a physical mass. In Moravia's phrase "can one posit something which exists and yet at the same time is non physical? Do the rejection of the soul and the achievements attained by bio and neurosciences oblige us to hold that man is nothing but body?"[30] Recently these have been attempted by some creative thinkers to reconceptualize intentions of 'reason' and 'intelligence' along anti-materialistic lines drawing on the experience of older non-Western traditions, or even popular folk conceptions.[31]

Islamic philosophy—which mainly studies purposes, as against science which mainly studies causes—sees, in line with the Quranic teaching, the role of objects and events as signs of divine presence and action. Faith is understood by Muslims not as a limitation on science but as its vista for enrichment and perfection.[32]

The variant perspectives of Western philosophy and science are also behind the Western puzzlement why Muslims have not become more secularized. This unwarranted assumption has in the past led to mistaken assessments of Islam and continues to foster genuine misunderstanding concerning the real nature of Islamic religion and intellectual traditions. The misunderstanding is

unfortunately not unique to Westerners. For the majority of Muslims today are also woefully uninformed of the depth and scope of their rich heritage on the authoritative validity of reason. Thinking Muslims should work to vindicate the symbiotic relation of faith and reason in their religion and see it as a source of enrichment and contribution of Islam to human understanding and civilization.

CONCLUSION

This essay advanced a Quranic perspective on thinking, which is affirmative in critical and goal-oriented thinking and also provides a set of guidelines that ensures its purity and purpose from negative reductionist influences. The guidelines so provided are also rich in advancing a spiritual dimension with the understanding that thinking which is not informed by morality and faith can lose its direction and purpose and can even become harmful to human welfare. From the Quranic vantage point, the sciences of nature should be key to our cognition of the signs of God in the universe. For this may be instrumental in solving individual and social problems without interrupting the cosmic order and the human habitat on earth. The blatant disregard of ethical values in science has weakened scientists' sense of responsibility and contributed to the degradation of the human condition on the globe.

Since thinking is a skill that can be advanced by self-application and training, it is amenable to guidance, bereavement, and enrichment. Universities and institutions of learning in Muslim countries are generally short of resources, and those who have the means still fall short, to their detriment, of nurturing the culture of reading and research among their students and scholars. Centers of higher learning may do well to establish a new order of relationship between the natural sciences and humanities, and between all fields of knowledge and human welfare and also the avenues of benefit to society. The present-day education system is due for a reappraisal in order to instill creative thinking and breadth of vision among students and scholars that is informed by the inter-relatedness of the various disciplines of learning. This could be done, as one observer suggested, "by adding sufficient number of courses in humanities to the science and engineering curricula, by cross-disciplinary interaction and collaboration."[33] The main characteristic of the human sciences, from the Islamic perspective, is that they are not value-free and have to be incorporated within the value system of Islam that is informed by the ethical and human dimension of values.

It is ironic to note, however, that the vast majority of Muslims are wont to rote reading of the Quran which is patently vacuous and devoid of thinking. The Quran is usually read, committed to memory, and cited for its spiritual merit rather than intellectual stimulation and enrichment. This is evidently not the advice one obtains from the Quran itself Al-Qaradawi has rightly observed about the current realities of public education in Muslim countries that "the system relies on memorization and cramming more than it does on compre-

hension and analysis. A typical weakness of this method is that the memorizer forgets as soon as the exams are over. But if what is learned is founded in understanding and comprehension, its substance will remain in the mind and will not be prone to oblivion so quickly."[34]

But the issue that we raise here is well-entrenched and originates in the overall emphasis that most educationists and jurists of earlier times have placed on the study of the Quran, Hadith and *fiqh* manuals, often calling attention to words and sentences of the text at the expense of comprehension and analysis. The basic approach to Quran studies thus emphasized correct pronunciation and memorization. This repetitive system of learning was particularly pronounced in the context of child education, although it was not confined to this framework as other and more advanced levels of Islamic scholarship also bore the same influence.[35]

Notwithstanding the profound influence of the Quran on the thoughts, mores, and cultures of Muslim individuals and societies, thinking by its nature does not lend itself to any predetermined framework and guideline. It seems that the Quran also seeks only to provide signs and signposts on thinking, but the subjective and innately individual bent of thinking is often inspired by imagination and insight which cannot be encapsulated by definitions and guidelines. A creative mind is unique by its attributes, and thinking that originates in a learned and upright individual is one of the greatest gifts of creation that can itself fit the description of divine example, or sign, of God on earth.

It remains to be added though that imaginative thinking has also been sparkled by sources and influences among great Muslim thinkers of other cultures and traditions—just as we note also that the great thinkers of history emerged in all regions, cultures, and religions. The substance of these statements is upheld in a renowned Hadith in which the Prophet instructed the Muslims to "seek knowledge, even unto China," and in another Hadith that "wisdom is the lost property of the believer; he is entitled to it wherever he finds it."

Knowledge and wisdom must therefore be ultimately seen as the shared achievements of humanity, endowed and posited by its outstanding and creative thinkers. This is also known from the fact that the outcomes of creative thinking are often shared and experienced far beyond geographical locales and frontiers—more so perhaps in the age of globalization.

It is hoped that the great thinkers and leaders of humanity make it a part of their agenda and commitment to narrow down the distances and divides between the intellectual and cultural traditions of the world and aspire them to the veritable vision of a shared destiny and wider human fraternity in their deliberations.

Mohammad Hashim Kamali[36]

PREVIEW *BOOK YEAR 9*

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

The Lessons in *Book Year 1* through *Book Year 24*, including *Book Year 9* presented here, are numbered consecutively in order of the revelation of a Quranic Chapter. Here, in *Book Year 9*, we begin with Lesson 62 which is the 62nd Quranic Chapter 42 revealed followed by Quranic Chapters 43, 44, 45, 46, 51 and, finally, Lesson 68 and Quranic Chapter 88.

The chronological order of the chapters of the Quran that follow throughout the series is based on the list accepted by al-Azhar University in Cairo[1] and is considered to be the official order. It differs greatly from the chronological order developed by Western scholars over the centuries and is much more detailed.

Quranic signs or verses (*ayat*) of each section (*ruku*) in a particular Quranic chapter are given in each lesson followed by a commentary. A short paragraph describes the Eight Elements of Reason and then a paragraph titled Example of How Quranic Critical Thinking Works. The paragraph that comes after this is for the student to determine which of the statements are one of the Eight Elements of Reasoning. Each Lesson ends with a Student Self-assessment.

We do not have a great deal of detailed information about the life of the Prophet Muhammad during the Makkah period. The information that we have falls in the various lessons. Appendix 1 correlates the original Quranic chapters with their chronological order.

LESSON 62(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
DEVELOPING INSIGHT INTO EGO- OR SOCIO-CENTRICITY

In the Quranic perspective, ego-centricity as exemplified by the extremists (Salafists) as being selfish, self-centered, egocentric, thinking only of himself or herself without regard for the feelings or desires of others; having or regarding himself or herself as the center of all things. These are signs of ingratitude. It is to be irrational and unjust, having little or no regard for interests, beliefs, or attitudes other than one's own.

The ungrateful in Makkah at the time of the revelation, similar to the extremists (Salafists) today, cannot readily believe that they are acting out of self-interest. They continue to be unwilling to consider the point of view of others, believing that their view is 'the truth'. They refuse to accept the points of view of others when that would prevent them from getting what they thought that they want. They have to be right about everything. Being self-centered is the opposite of thinking critically.

Ego-centricity in terms of critical thinking is to confuse the immediate perception with reality. It manifests itself as an inability or unwillingness to consider others' points of view, to accept ideas or facts which would conflict with gratification of desire. In the extreme, it is characterized by a need to be right about everything, a lack of interest in consistency and clarity, an all or nothing attitude: I am 100% right; you are 100% wrong, and a lack of self-consciousness of one's own thought processes. The ego-centric individual is more concerned with the appearance of truth, fairness, and fair-mindedness, than with actually being correct, fair, or fair-minded. Egocentricity is the opposite of critical thought.

As people are socialized, ego-centricity partly evolves into socio-centricity. What is socio-centricity? It is the assumption by Salafi students that their own social group is inherently and self-evidently superior to all others. When a group or society sees itself as superior and so considers its views about the world as correct or as the only reasonable or justifiable views, and all its actions justified, there is a tendency to presuppose this superiority in all of its thinking and thus to think closed-mindedly. All dissent and doubt are considered disloyal, and rejected without consideration. Few people recognize the socio-centric nature of much of their thought. They develop a prejudice.

What is prejudice? A judgment, belief, opinion, point of view—favorable or unfavorable—formed before the facts are known, resistant to evidence and reason, or in disregard of facts which contradict it. Self-announced prejudice is rare. Prejudice almost always exists in obscured, rationalized, socially validated, functional forms. It enables people to sleep peacefully at night even while flagrantly abusing the rights of others. It enables people to get more of what they want, or to get it more easily. It is often sanctioned with a superabundance of pomp and self-righteousness. Unless students who are prone to

radicalization recognize these powerful tendencies toward selfish thought in the Salafi ideology, even in what appear to be lofty actions and moralistic rhetoric, they will not face squarely the problem of prejudice in human thought and action.

Uncritical and selfishly critical thought are often prejudiced. Most instruction in schools today, because students do not think their way to what they accept as true, tends to give students prejudices rather than knowledge. For example, partly as a result of schooling, people often accept as authorities those who incite irrational fear in them and unjust opinions. This prejudice toward pseudo-authority impedes rational assessment. Ego-centric identification extends to groups. The individual goes from: I am right! to: We are right! To put this another way, people find that they can often best satisfy their egocentric desires through a group.

Their belief in their own rightness is easier to maintain because they suppress the faults in their thinking. They automatically hide their ego-centricity from themselves. They fail to notice when their behavior contradicts their self-image. They base their reasoning on false assumptions they are unaware of making. They fail to make relevant distinctions of which they are otherwise aware, and able to make (when making such distinctions does not prevent them from getting what they want). They deny or conveniently 'forget' facts inconsistent with their conclusions. They often misunderstand or distort what others say.

The solution, then, is to learn how the Quran, their sacred text, teaches how to reflect on their reasoning and behavior; to make their assumptions explicit, to critique them, and, when they are false, stop making them; to apply the same concepts in the same ways to themselves and others; to consider every relevant fact, and to make their conclusions consistent with the evidence; and to listen carefully and openmindedly to those with whom they disagree. They can change egocentric tendencies when they see them for what they are: irrational and unjust. Therefore, the development of the awareness of students of their egocentric and sociocentric patterns of thought is a crucial part of education in Quranic critical thinking.

Students, and American Muslim students, in particular, should learn from the Quran how to reflect in order to solve any problem of self-centeredness or egocentricity that they may have. They should learn to reflect on their reasoning ability as well as on their behavior. This they do by clarifying their beliefs, critiquing them and when they realize that they may be false, they stop believing or behaving as they had been doing. They should reflect on all the relevant facts and make sure that their conclusions are consistent with the evidence they have before them. They need to listen carefully to others and be open-minded to other points of view.

Being self-centered carries over from an individual to one's society. Being sociocentric is to tend to regard one's own social group or family as superior

to others. When students study the early pre-Islamic community, they find that the Arabs in pre-Islamic times followed tribal law. Their slogan was: My tribe, right or wrong; my tribe is better than your tribe; my family is better than your family. This was how their individual self-centeredness transformed into socio-centricity. Thinkers, such as the pre-Quranic Arab, who were not critical thinkers, often confused their loyalty to their group by constant support even if their group was wrong. 'Group think' results when people egocentrically attach themselves to a group. One can see this in both children and adults: My daddy is better than your daddy! My school (religion, country, race, etc.) is better than yours.

If ego-centricity and socio-centricity are the disease, critical thinking that brings self-awareness is the cure. In cases in which their own egocentric commitments are not supported, few people accept another's egocentric reasoning. Most can identify the socio-centricity of members of opposing groups. Yet when we are thinking egocentrically or socio-centrically, it seems right to students (at least at the time).

Although everyone has egocentric, sociocentric, and critical (or fairminded) tendencies to some extent, the purpose of education in critical thinking is to help students move away from ego-centricity and socio-centricity toward increasingly critical thought. The sacred text helps students learn about their own sense of irrationality and injustice to the extent that it is present. Students should repeatedly discuss why people think irrationally and act unfairly.

The teacher can facilitate discussions of ego-centric or socio-centric thought and behavior whenever such discussions seem relevant. Such discussions can be used as a basis for having students think about their own egocentric or sociocentric tendencies. The class can discuss conditions under which people are most likely to be egocentric and how ego-centricity interferes with their ability to think and listen. By discussing what people think (and how they think) when they are being egocentric and sociocentric, students can begin to recognize common patterns of ego-centric thought. The class can discuss some of the common false assumptions they make at times. For example:

> Anyone who disapproves of anything I do is wrong or unfair.
> I have a right to have everything I want.
> Truth is what I want it to be. Different is bad.
> Our group (country, school, language, etc.) is better than any other.

HISTORY

RENOUNCING PROTECTION FROM IDOLATERS:
UTHMAN IBN MAZUN RENOUNCES AL-WALID'S PROTECTION

Salih ibn Ibrahim ibn Abdul Rahman ibn Auf told me from one

who had got it from Uthman saying: When Uthman ibn Mazun saw the misery in which the Messenger's companions were living while he lived night and day under al-Walid's protection he said: It is more than I can bear that I should be perfectly safe under the protection of a polytheist while my friends and co-religionists are afflicted and distressed for God's sake.

So he went to al-Walid and renounced his protection.

He asked: Why, nephew? Can it be that one of my people has injured you?

He answered: No, but I want to be under God's protection: I don't want to ask for anyone else's.

Al-Walid asked him to come to the mosque and renounce his protection publicly as he had given it publicly.

When they got there al-Walid said: Uthman here has come to renounce my protection.

Uthman said: True. I have found him loyal and honorable in his protection, but I don't want to ask anyone but God for protection; so I give him back his promise!

So saying he went away.

[On another occasion when] Labid ibn Rabia ibn Malik ibn Jafar ibn Kilab was in an assembly of the Quraysh when Uthman was present he recited a verse:

Everything but God is vain.
Uthman said: True! But when he went on:
And everything lovely must inevitably cease.

Uthman cried: You lie! The joy of Paradise will never cease.

Labid said: O men of Quraysh your friends never used to be annoyed thus. Since when has this sort of thing happened among you?

One of the audience answered: This is one of those louts with Muhammad. They have abandoned our religion. Take no notice of what he says.

Uthman objected so energetically that the matter became serious. Whereupon that man rose to his feet and hit him and blackened his eye..

Now al-Walid was watching what happened to Uthman and he said: O nephew, your eye need not have suffered this had you remained in sure protection.

Uthman answered: Nay by God my good eye needs what happened to its fellow for God's sake, and I am under the protection of One who is stronger and more powerful than you, O Abu Abdu Shams.

Al-Walid only said: Come, nephew, my protection is always open to you.

But he declined it.[1]

QURANIC CHAPTER 42: THE CONSULTATION (AL-SHURA)
SIGNS 42:1-42:9

Makkah: *Ha Mim.* (42:1)
Ayn Sin Qaf. (42:2)
Thus, He reveals to ***you*** *and to those who were before* ***you,***
God is The Almighty, The Wise. (42:3)
To Him belongs whatever is in
and on the heavens and whatever is in and on the earth.
And He is The Lofty, The Sublime. (42:4)
The heavens are about to split asunder from above them
while the angels glorify the praise of their Lord
and ask forgiveness for whoever is on the earth.
Truly, God, He is The Forgiving, The Compassionate. (42:5)
As for those who took to themselves other than Him as protectors,
God is Guardian over them and ***you*** *are not*
a Trustee over them. (42:6)
And, thus, We revealed to ***you*** *an Arabic Recitation*
that ***you*** *will warn the Mother of the Towns*
and whoever is around it.
And warn of the Day of Amassing.
There is no doubt about it. A group of people
will be in the Garden and a group of people
will be in the blaze. (42:7)
And if God willed, He would have made them one community
but He causes to enter whom He wills into His mercy.
And the ones who are unjust,
there is not for them either a protector or a helper. (42:8)
Or they took other than Him to themselves as protectors.
But God, He alone is The Protector. And He gives life to the dead.
And He is Powerful over everything. (42:9)

COMMENTARY°

We spoke previously about the separate letters that begin several chapters. Here we have five of these, followed by the sign saying: *Thus, He reveals to* ***you*** *and to those who were before* ***you,*** *God is The Almighty, The Wise.* (42:3) Thus, in this way and following this pattern, God sent down His revelations to you and to messengers before you. It is made of words and phrases composed of those letters

known to people. People know these words and phrases and grasp their meanings, but they cannot compose anything like it out of the letters they know so well.

The section then adds other attributes belonging to God: *To Him belongs whatever is in and on the heavens and whatever is in and on the earth. And He is The Lofty, The Sublime.* (42:4) People are often deluded, thinking that they own something of what they have in their hands; it appears to be at their disposal and they use it for their own benefit. Theirs, however, is not true ownership. The true owner is God who creates, brings to life and deals death. He alone can give people whatever He wishes, withhold, take away or replace what He chooses. He is *The Lofty, The Sublime.* His ownership is marked by His supremacy, making everything else appear lowly and inferior.

When this truth is well established in our minds, we know to whom we should turn to request what we wish for good things, provisions and earnings. *The heavens are about to split asunder from above them while the angels glorify the praise of their Lord and ask forgiveness for whoever is on the earth. Truly, God, He is The Forgiving, The Compassionate.* (42:5)

This section continues with a reference to those who take for themselves protectors other than God, when it has become clear that no one else in the universe can give any protection. In this way, He makes it clear to His Messenger that he is not responsible for them. It is God who watches over them and He will deal with them as He likes: *As for those who took to themselves other than Him as protectors, God is Guardian over them and you are not a Trustee over them.*(42:6)

So We have revealed to you a discourse in the Arabic tongue in order that you may warn the Mother City and all who dwell around it; that you may forewarn them of the Day of the Gathering, of which there is no doubt, when some shall be in paradise and some in the blazing fire. Had God so willed, He could have made them all one single community, but He admits to His grace whoever He will, whereas the wrongdoers will have no one to protect them and no one to support them. Have they chosen protectors other than Him? God alone is the Protector of all; He is the One who gives life to the dead; and He has power over all things. (42:7-42:9)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based

on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

LEARN WHAT TERMS MEAN

Outline: An outline answer is organized description. You should give main points and essential supplementary materials, omitting minor details, and present the information in a systematic arrangement or classification.

Prove: A question which requires proof is one which demands confirmation or verification. In such discussions you should establish something with certainty by evaluating and citing experiential evidence or by logical reasoning.

Relate: In a question which asks you to show the relationship or to relate, your answer should emphasize connections and associations in descriptive form.

Review: A review specifies a critical examination. You should analyze and comment briefly in organized sequence upon the major points of the problem.

State: In questions which direct you to specify, give, state, or present, you are called upon to express the high points in brief, clear narrative form.

Details: and usually illustrations or examples, may be omitted.

Summarize: When you are asked to summarize or present a summarization, you should give in condensed form the main points or facts. All details, illustrations and elaboration are to be omitted.

Trace: When a question asks you to trace a course of events, you are to give a description of progress, historical sequence, or development from the point of origin. Such narratives may call for probing or for deduction.

Say: Remember what you thought about ego-centric people before we studied them?

Which of our original beliefs were false or misleading?

Why did we think that way?

Where did we get these ideas?

How do people come to think they know what other people are like before they know anything about them?

What false beliefs might other people have about us? Why?

Questions to Generate Various Emotions•

Thoughts when feeling anger: This is dangerous. I may be harmed.

Thoughts when feeling indifference: This is not right, not fair.

Thoughts when feeling relief: This does not matter, no one can do anything about this.

Thoughts when feeling positive: Things are better now. This won't bother me anymore.

Questions to Evoke Personal or Social Change•
Why was she willing to do this? Was she scared?
What else did she feel that helped her ignore her fears?
Why? How did she look at things that helped her endure and stick with it?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to evaluate my ideas based on what I had learned in this lesson.

I was able to then describe why I had these ideas.

After study, you should evaluate your ideas in light of what you have learned, and why you had these ideas.

Those who were ungrateful should not assume that the indulgence We grant to them is better for them. We only grant indulgence to them so that they add sin! For them is a despised punishment. (3:178)

LESSON 62(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY EXPLORING THOUGHTS UNDERLYING FEELINGS AND FEELINGS UNDERLYING THOUGHTS

In order to better analyze ourselves, we need to separate our sense of reason from their emotions, our *nafs al-natiqah* from our *nafs al-ammarah* as if we had two opposing parts in our mind. Yet, they are closely connected. Our reason is based on some level of our emotions and our emotions are based on some level of our reasoning. To develop self-understanding, to come to know who we are, we need to understand the connection between the two.

Those who develop Quranic critical thinking come to realize that they are responding to a situation with their feelings (emotions) rather than with their reason (thought).They realize that their feelings would change if they understood the situation in a different way.

It has been found that uncritical thinkers are likely not to see any relationship between their feelings and their thoughts. This allows them to escape any responsibility for their feelings and thoughts and their resulting actions or behavior. The Quran says:

If we tend to base our decisions on our emotions, we need to understand them by asking ourselves the Quranic question: *Do they feel that they want other than the way of life of God* (din) *while to Him submitted whatever is in the heavens and the earth willingly or unwillingly and they are returned to Him?* (3:83)

QURANIC CHAPTER 42: THE CONSULTATION (AL-SHURA) SIGNS 42:10-42:19

Makkah: *Whatever thing about which*
you were at variance in it,
then, its determination is with God.
That is God, my Lord
in Whom I put my trust
and to Him I am penitent, (42:10)
One Who is Originator of the heavens and the earth.
He made for you spouses of yourselves and of the flocks, pairs
by which means He makes you numerous in it.
There is not like Him anything.
And He is The Hearing, The Seeing. (42:11)
To Him belongs the pass keys of the heavens and the earth.
He extends provision for whomever He wills and measures it.
Truly, He is The Knowing of everything. (42:12)
He laid down the law of the way of life for you,
that with which He charged Noah and what We revealed to you
and that with which We charged Abraham and Moses and Jesus.

Perform the prescribed way of life and be not split up in it.
Troublesome for the ones who are polytheists is
*that to which **you** call them.*
God elects for Himself whomever He wills
and guides the penitent to Himself. (42:13)
And they split not up
until after the knowledge drew near them
through insolence between themselves.
*And if it were not for a Word that preceded from **your** Lord*
—until a term, that which is determined—
it would be decided between them.
And, truly, those who were given as inheritance
the Book after them
are in uncertainty, in grave doubt about it. (42:14)
Then, for that, call to this.
*And go **you** straight as **you** were commanded.*
And follow not their desires.
And say: I believed in what God caused to descend from a Book.
And I was commanded to be just among you.
God is our Lord and your Lord.
For us are our actions and for you, your actions.
There is no disputation between us and between you.
God will gather us together.
And to Him is the Homecoming. (42:15)
And those who argue with one another about God,
after He was assented to,
their disputations are null and void with their Lord,
and on them is His anger.
And for them will be a severe punishment. (42:16)
It is God Who caused the Book to descend
with The Truth and the Balance.
*And what causes **you** to recognize it*
so that perhaps the Hour is near? (42:17)
Seeking to hasten are those who believe not in it.
Those who believed are ones who are apprehensive of it.
And they know that it is The Truth, those who altercate, truly, about
the Hour are, certainly, going far astray. (42:18)
God is Subtle with His servants. He provides to whom He wills.
And He is The Strong, The Almighty. (42:19)

COMMENTARY°

The section returns to the central issue, identifying the ultimate

point of reference in judging any dispute. It is this new revelation from God, containing His judgment. This ensures that changeable personal preferences and fleeting desires cannot influence life under the divine code that admits no prejudice:

These signs (42:10-42:12) express a number of facts, but the way these are stated and their sequence and juxtaposition in this short passage is truly remarkable, requiring proper reflection. Upon such reflection, the interlinking between their inner and outer aspects is both subtle and precise. Everything over which dispute arises between people should be judged by God: *Whatever thing about which you were at variance in it, then, its determination is with God.* (42:10) God has made His judgment clear in this Quran, stating His final word concerning this life and the life to come. He also established the code of living which people should follow in their personal and community lives, in their dealings among themselves, their system of government and their moral values and manners. He has made all this abundantly clear, making the Quran a comprehensive constitution for human life, with a scope that is broader than their own constitutions. Therefore, should dispute arise between them, the right judgment is ready for them, outlined in His revelation delivered to them by His messenger.

When this truth has been established, the sign quotes the Prophet's statement whereby he clearly submits himself and all his affairs to God, turning to Him in all situations: *That is God, my Lord in Whom I put my trust and to Him I am penitent.* (42:10) Thus, the Prophet's statement that he turns to God, places all his trust in Him and relies on Him in all situations, occurs at the most suitable point, serving as it does as a comment on the preceding rule. When God's Messenger who receives guidance from God declares his attitude in these terms, how can other people refer their disputes to anyone else or place their trust in other beings? Knowing that God is his Lord who provides everything for him and guides him to what is best, the Prophet makes his choice, turning to Him alone. How can others make a different choice?

A further comment is then made to consolidate this truth: *There is not like Him anything. And He is The Hearing, The Seeing.* (42:11) The One who revealed the Quran to provide final judgment on all people's disputes is the Originator of the heavens and the earth, who controls them. The law that governs the heavens and the earth is His final judgment on all that concerns them. Human life is only a part of what takes place in the heavens and the earth. Therefore, His judgment on human matters ensures harmony between human life and the life of the great universe.

God, to whose judgment they should refer all their disputes, is the One who created them and molded their souls: *One Who is Originator of the heavens and the earth.* (42:11) Thus He designed your life giving it its very foundation. He knows what is best for you and what suits your life, putting it in harmony with the rest of His creation: *He made for you spouses of yourselves and of the flocks, pairs by which means He makes you numerous in it.* (42:11) This unity in biological form confirms the unity of will and design. Therefore, people and animals multiply and procreate in the same natural process. By contrast, He is alone in the way He is, with no comparability to anything or anyone: *There is not like Him anything.* (42:11) Human nature accepts this without hesitation. The Creator of all cannot be compared to anything He creates. Therefore, His creatures refer to Him when they differ. They cannot refer to anyone else alongside Him because nothing is comparable to Him.

Although God, in His limitless glory, is beyond comparability with anyone or anything, contact between Him and His creation is not severed. *And He is The Hearing, The Seeing.* (42:11) His judgment is that of the One who knows, hears and sees.

Having made these points, the chapter immediately returns to its central theme: (42:13-42:15)

The third reference states the unity of the message whereas the first reference identified the unity of its source: *He laid down the law of the way of life for you, that with which He charged Noah and what We revealed to you and that with which We charged Abraham and Moses and Jesus. Perform the prescribed way of life and be not split up in it. Troublesome for the ones who are polytheists is that to which you have called them. God elects for Himself whomever He wills and guides the penitent to Himself.* (42:13)

In this third reference, the chapter clearly states that division occurred because people disobeyed God's injunction. This did not come about as a result of any ignorance on the part of the followers of those noble messengers; they had the knowledge to spare them such division. It simply occurred as a result of injustice and envy: *And they split not up until after the knowledge drew near them through insolence between themselves.* (42:14) The chapter then moves on to describe the conditions of those who came after the generations that differed: *And if it were not for a Word that preceded from your Lord—until a term, that which is determined—it would be decided between them. And, truly, those who were given as inheritance the Book after them are in uncertainty, in grave doubt about it.* (42:14)

At this point it becomes abundantly clear that humanity had sunk into a state of confusion and doubt. It no longer had a wise leadership

following a well-defined code. The divine message that assumes the leadership of humanity suffered from the division that took place between its followers, while succeeding generations viewed it with profound suspicion, thereby precluding the emergence of wise leadership. The chapter therefore declares that this final message and the Messenger delivering it are to assume the role of leadership: *Then, for that, call to this. And go you straight as you were commanded. And follow not their desires. And say: I believed in what God caused to descend from a Book. And I was commanded to be just among you. God is our Lord and your Lord. For us are our actions and for you, your actions. There is no disputation between us and between you. God will gather us together. And to Him is the Homecoming.* (42:15) Thus the detailed description of the Muslim community, which occurs in the second part of the chapter, comes as a natural progression, because it is this community that will assume the leadership of humanity.

Given that He makes His judgment final in all people's disputes, this can only mean that this rule is based on the fact that having originated the heavens and the earth and set their laws in operation, He continues to hold their keys: *To Him belongs the pass keys of the heavens and the earth.* (42:12) Since humanity are only part of what lives in the heavens and earth, the same fact applies to them, which means that the keys and treasures of the universe belong to God. Moreover, it is He who provides them with sustenance, determining its measure in the same way as He conducts all affairs: *He extends provision for whomever He wills and measures it.* (42:12) It is He who gives them the food they eat and the water they drink, providing everything they need in their lives. Can they, then, refer to anyone else for judgment in their affairs? It is the most natural procedure for people to turn to the One who controls all this according to His perfect knowledge: *Truly, He is The Knowing of everything.* (42:12) Needless to say, the One who knows everything is the One who can make a final judgment in all fairness.

This is just one example of how the meanings of the component parts of the chapter's signs converge in complete harmony and perfect subtlety to work on the human heart. It is akin to the harmonious tones that combine to make a superb melody.

Once more the chapter addresses its central theme: In matters of faith, He has ordained for you the same as He had enjoined on Noah—that which We have revealed to you [Muhammad]—and as We enjoined on Abraham, Moses and Jesus: (42:13-42:15)

Again the chapter speaks of the followers of earlier messengers who divided into sects and groups although the messengers preached

the same faith: (42:14) Their divisions did not come about as a result of ignorance, or because they did not know the single source that grouped their messengers and faiths together. They divided after knowledge was given to them. This division was caused by selfish rivalry and mutual envy. Thus, they were not only unjust to the truth but also to themselves. There was no single reason based on the true faith for their division. Had they been true to their faith, they would have remained united.

They deserved to be immediately taken to task in requital for their division and deviation, but God, in His wisdom, had already ordained to allow them time, up to a specified point only He knows: (42:14) Thus, the truth is established and falsehood is seen in its true guise. Matters are settled in this present life, but judgment is deferred until the Day of Resurrection. The generations that came after the division that split the followers of every one of God's messengers received the faith and the divine book uncertain of its truth. Division, then, had allowed doubt and confusion to creep in, making people unable to determine which of the numerous doctrines and groups was right: *And, truly, those who were given as inheritance the Book after them are in uncertainty, in grave doubt about it.* (42:14)

Therefore, call people to that faith, and follow the straight path as you have been commanded. Do not follow their likes and dislikes, but say: I believe in whatever revelation God has bestowed from on high. I am commanded to ensure justice between you. God is our Lord and your Lord. To us shall be accounted our deeds, and to you, your deeds. Let there be no argument between us and you. God will bring us all together, and to Him we shall all return. (42:15)

This is a new leadership for all humanity; a strong leadership, sure of its way and firm in its beliefs. It advocates its message equipped with true insight, and follows God's orders without deviation, steering away from all conflicting forces. This new leadership of humanity declares that the divine message is one and the way to which it guides people is the same. Thus, all divine faith comes from one source and humanity must turn to that source only: (42:15) Its constitution and policy is based on truth and justice: *For us are our actions and for you, your actions. There is no disputation between us and between you.* (42:15) This new leadership has definite authority enabling it to declare justice among all humanity even at the time when it was confined to the narrow valleys of Makkah, where its followers suffered unrelenting persecution. Yet its authority was clear to all. It clearly announces that: (1) the Lord of the universe is the One Lord: *God is our Lord and your Lord.* (42:15); (2) everyone is responsible for their own actions: *For us are our actions and for you,*

your actions. (42:15); (3) all argument is ended as Gods final word is given: *Le there be no disputation between us and between you.* (42:15); and (4) *God will gather us together. And to Him is the Homecoming.* (42:15)

This single sign with short, clear and decisive statements describes the nature of this last message in all its clarity. It is a message that means to follow its own way, unaffected by people's desires. It aims to extend its authority so as to ensure justice between all people. Its objective is to show the one way leading to God since it is the only way defined by all messages.

As the issues have thus been clarified and the community of believers have assuredly responded to God's message, the argument of those still disputing about God appears to be both singular and trivial, lacking basis and weight. A final word is stated about them making clear that they will have to face the punishment they have been warned against: (42:16) Whoever posits an argument that is null and void in Gods sight has nothing to offer. Not only are his arguments proven false in this life, but in the life to come he will incur God's anger and face severe punishment for persisting with such falsehood.

Yet another round is started to drive the central theme of the chapter home to us: It is God who has bestowed revelation from on high, setting forth the truth, and established the balance. For all you know, the Last Hour may well be near. Those who do not believe in it seek to hasten it, whereas the believers stand in awe of it and know it to be the truth. Those who argue about the Last Hour have gone far astray. God is most kind towards His creatures. He provides for whoever He will. He is the Powerful, the Almighty. To anyone who desires a harvest in the life to come, We shall grant an increase in his harvest; whereas to the one who desires a harvest in this world, We shall give a share of it, but he will have no share in the life to come. . (42:17-42:19)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

HELPFUL HINTS ABOUT QUESTIONING YOUR FEELINGS

Raise basic issues to yourself.

Explore beneath the surface of things.

Follow-up problematic areas of feelings.
Discover the structure of their own thoughts and feelings.
Develop sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
Arrive at judgment through your own reasoning.
Note claims, evidence, conclusions, questions-at-issue, assumptions, implications, consequences, concepts, interpretations, and the Quranic point of view

QUESTIONS

Whenever you discuss someone's feelings in a classroom setting, you can consider what the person might be thinking to have that feeling in that situation:

Why does the "one who turns away" feel this way?
How is he interpreting his situation?
What led him to that conclusion?
Would you have felt the same if you had been in his circumstances?
Why or why not?
What accounts for the difference?
What could he have thought instead?
Then how might he have felt?

This strategy can be used in the service of developing a sense of justice and courage by exploring your thoughts that underlie your feelings. You can discuss the thoughts underlying passionate commitment to personal or social change.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to do all of the following and, as a result, am beginning to understand my feelings about certain issues.
Raise basic issues to yourself.
Explore beneath the surface of things.
Follow-up problematic areas of feelings.
Discover the structure of their own thoughts and feelings.
Develop sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
Arrive at judgment through your own reasoning.

LESSON 62(3). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
DEVELOPING INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY

The development of an attitude of intellectual curiosity is of prime importance in learning how to become a Quranic critical thinker. Quranic thinkers need to be curious about their environment.

Critical thinkers need to seek explanations of apparent discrepancies. They need to speculate as to possible causes of these discrepancies. In short, they need to be predisposed to wonder about the world around them. This sense of wonder, this intellectual curiosity that seeks explanations and offers solutions, is something that can be and needs to be encouraged and developed.

QURANIC CHAPTER 42: THE CONSULTATION (AL-SHURA)
SIGNS 42:20-42:29

Makkah: *Whoever had been wanting*
cultivation of the world to come,
We increase his cultivation for him.
Whoever had been wanting cultivation
of the present, We give him of it.
And he has not a share in the world to come. (42:20)
Or ascribe they associates who laid down the law
of the way of life for them for which God gives not permission?
Were it not for a decisive word, it would be decided among them.
And, truly, the ones who are unjust,
for them is a painful punishment. (42:21)
***You** will see the ones who are unjust*
as ones who are apprehensive
of what they earned and it is that which falls on them.
And those who believed and did
as the ones in accord with morality,
are in the well-watered meadows of the Gardens.
For them will be whatever they will from their Lord.
That it is the great grace. (42:22)
Madinah (42:23)
Madinah (42:24)
Madinah (42:25)
Makkah: *And He responds to those who believed*
and did as the ones in accord with morality,
and increases them of His grace.
And as for the ones who are ungrateful,
theirs will be a severe punishment. (42:26)
Madinah (42:27)
Makkah: *And He it is Who sends down plenteous rain water*

after they despaired and He unfolds His mercy.
And He is The Protector, The Worthy of Praise. (42:28)
And among His signs are the creation
of the heavens and the earth
and whatever of moving creatures He disseminated in them.
And He has the power of amassing them when He wills. (42:29)

COMMENTARY°

The section now speaks about the sustenance God, out of His grace, provides for all people. The link between this sign and the previous one speaking about the Last Hour and the different attitudes people take towards it seems unclear. However, it becomes very apparent when we read the next sign: (42:20)

The section earlier stated that what God has legislated for the Muslim community is the same as He had enjoined on Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus. In other words, all this is embodied in what God revealed to Muhammad. At this point, the chapter employs a rhetorical question addressing the ungrateful' beliefs and practices: essentially, these are contrary to what God has ordained in His messages, so who ordained the same for the ungrateful, without God's sanction? (42:21)

Those wrongdoers are shown as they will be on the Day of Judgment, afraid of what will happen to them. During their lives on earth, however, they entertained no such fear. On the contrary, they ridiculed the reckoning and asked for it to be hastened: (42:22) In the Arabic original they are described as full of fear for what they have done, as if their deeds are some fearful beast. Yet they performed these deeds with their own hands, enjoying their actions. Still, when they face these same deeds they are full of fear, realizing that they are bound to fall back on them, as though the deeds themselves are transformed into a punishment they cannot avoid.

Conversely, we see the believers who used to be in awe of what would happen on that day now feeling safe, reassured, enjoying what God grants them: (42:22) The whole image is one of bliss and happiness. Those believers are in the *well-watered meadows of the Gardens* where they will have *whatever they will from their Lord.* There is no limit to His bounty, which is indeed supreme. This is, then, the good news that God gives to His God-conscious servants. It is good news that is shown to be ready, immediate, confirming the earlier promise of good things to come.

And He responds to those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality, and increases them of His grace. And as for

the ones who are ungrateful, theirs will be a severe punishment. (42:26) It is He who sends down rain when they have lost all hope, and spreads His grace far and wide. He is the Protector, worthy of all praise. *And He it is Who sends down plenteous rain water after they despaired and He unfolds His mercy. And He is The Protector, The Worthy of Praise.* (42:28)

Among His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and all the living creatures which He placed in them. *And among His signs are the creation of the heavens and the earth and whatever of moving creatures He disseminated in them. And He has the power of amassing them when He wills.* (42: 29)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QUESTIONS

The following questions may help you in understanding intellectual curiosity.

What is it to look at things Quranically?
You seem to be approaching this issue from x perspective.
Why have you chosen this rather than that perspective?
How would other groups/types of people respond? Why?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I sometimes waste time. That is, I sometimes fail to use all of my time productively or even pleasurably.
Sometimes I jump from one diversion to another, without enjoying any of them.
Sometimes I become irritated about matters beyond my control.
Sometimes I fail to plan well causing me negative consequences.
Sometimes I worry unproductively.
Sometimes I spend time regretting what is past.
Sometimes I just stare off blankly into space.

LESSON 62(4). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY GENERATING PURPOSE, AIM, OBJECTIVE

One of the goals of the Quran is to encourage the oneness of humanity. Others are: to break the bonds of ignorance, missed guidance, social and moral corruption. These are all considered to be shadows or darknesses. When these bonds are broken, the Quran guides humanity to goodness, light and being fair and just.

You begin developing your reasoning or discernment faculty by understanding what this particular element of thought or reasoning is. That is, you learn to generate the purpose, aim, goal or objective of the Quranic signs and their message.

QURANIC CHAPTER 42: THE CONSULTATION (AL-SHURA) SIGNS 42:30-42:43

Makkah: *And whatever affliction lit on you*
is because of what your hands earned.
And He pardons much. (42:30)
And you are not ones who frustrate Him on the earth.
And there is not for you other than God
either a protector or a helper. (42:31)
And among His signs are the ones that run
on the sea like landmarks. (42:32)
If He wills, He stills the wind.
Then, they would stay, that which is motionless on the surface.
Truly, in that are signs
for every enduring and grateful one. (42:33)
Or He wreck them because of what they earned.
And He pardons them from much. (42:34)
And those who dispute Our signs know that
there is no asylum for them. (42:35)
So whatever thing you were given
is the enjoyment of this present life.
And what is with God is better and is that which endures
for those who believed and put their trust in their Lord (42:36)
and those who avoid the major sins
and the indecencies and they forgive
when they were angry (42:37)
and those who responded to their Lord
and performed their formal prayer and their affairs
are by counsel among themselves,
and who spend of what We provided them, (42:38)
and those who, when insolence lit on them,

they help each other. (42:39)
And the recompense for an evil deed is the like of an evil deed.
Then, whoever pardoned and made things right,
his compensation is due from God.
Truly, He loves not the ones who are unjust. (42:40)
As whoever helped himself after an injustice,
so those, there is not any way against them. (42:41)
The way is only against those who do wrong to humanity
and are insolent in and on the earth unrightfully.
Those, for them is a painful punishment. (42:42)
And whoever endured patiently and forgave,
truly, that is, certainly, a sign of constancy of affairs. (42:43)

COMMENTARY°

The section then tells them of what happens to the ungrateful in this life, as a result of what they perpetrate. Yet God does not take them to task for all this; He overlooks a great many of their actions. It describes their powerlessness as they occupy only a small corner of the living world: *And whatever affliction lit on you is because of what your hands earned. And He pardons much. And you are not ones who frustrate Him on the earth. And there is not for you other than God either a protector or a helper.* (42:30-42:31)

In the first of these two signs we see in action both God's justice and His grace as He bestows it on human beings. Every misfortune or calamity that befalls a person is a direct result of what a person does, but God does not hold him to account for all his deeds. He knows a person's weakness and the desires inherent in his nature which often tempt and overpower him. Therefore, God pardons much of what he does. In the second sign we see a person as he truly is: Weak, powerless and without support. From whom, then, can he seek protection other than from the One who protects all?

And among His signs are the ships that sail like floating mountains through the seas. If He wills, He stills the wind, and then they lie motionless on the surface of the sea. In this there are signs indeed for all who are patient in adversity and deeply grateful to God; or else He may cause them to perish because of what they have wrought and yet He forgives much. Let those who call Our messages into question know that there is no escape for them. (42:32-42:35)

The wind may die down at times and ships will lie motionless, as though life has departed from them. *If He wills, He stills the wind. Then, they would stay, that which is motionless on the surface. Truly, in that are signs for every enduring and grateful one.* (42:33)

He certainly does not punish people for every sinful action they do. Instead, He pardons and forgives much. *And He pardons them from much.* (42:34)

Should God want to smite them, destroy their ships or visit them with some other punishment, they simply have no means of escape. Thus they are made to know that whatever they possess of this life's riches, comforts and pleasures can always be taken away from them. The only thing that is stable in this present life is to maintain a close relation with God. *And those who dispute Our signs know that there is no asylum for them.* (42:35)

The section takes another step forward, alerting them to the fact that whatever they have in life on earth is transient. The only lasting value is what God grants in the life to come to those who have believed and placed their trust in Him. Some of the distinctive qualities that make of true believers a separate community are then given.

Whatever you are given is but for the enjoyment of life in this world, but that which is with God is much better and more enduring. [It shall be given] to those who believe and place their trust in their Lord; who shun grave sins and gross indecencies; and who, when angered, will forgive; who respond to their Lord, attend regularly to their prayer, conduct their affairs by mutual consultation, and give generously out of what We have provided for them; and who, when oppressed, defend themselves. An evil deed is requited by an evil like it, but the one who forgives and puts things right will have his reward with God. He does not love wrongdoers. However, no blame attaches to those who defend themselves after having been wronged. Blame attaches only to those who oppress other people and transgress in the land against all right. For such, there is painful suffering in store. As for the one who is patient in adversity and forgives; this requires the exercise of a truly strong resolve. (42:36-42:43)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions,** (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

LEARNING TO THINK QURANICALLY

Accuracy (to be free from error)

The purpose or goal needs to be understood when students concern themselves with accuracy and truth. They should ask themselves:

What evidence do I have to support this purpose?
How it can be explained to help others understand,?
Can objections be raised from other points of view?
Are there any limitations to our point if view?

QUESTIONS

Are the Quranic words clear? Do we have to analyze any concepts?
Do we know when the key Quranic words and phrases apply and don't apply?
Do we clearly understand how they apply to this sign?
Does this question ask something about facts?
About the meanings of words?
Are we evaluating anything?
What? Why? What criteria should we use in the evaluation?
What facts are relevant?
How can we get the evidence we need?
How would the facts be gathered?
What would researchers have to do to conduct such a study?
What problems would they face?
How could those obstacles be surmounted?

How would your rate yourself? Answer the following:s

Am I clear about what precisely I am evaluating?;
Am I clear about my purpose? Is my purpose legitimate?
Given my purpose, what are the relevant criteria or standards for evaluation?
Do I have sufficient information about that which I am evaluating?
Is that information relevant to the purpose?
Have I applied my criteria accurately and fairly to the facts as I know them?
Uncritical thinkers often treat evaluation as mere preference or treat their evaluative judgments as direct observations not admitting of error.

LESSON 62(5). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
CLARIFYING ISSUES OR CONCLUSIONS

When there is a clear question stated about an issue in a Quranic sign, it is important for Quranic critical thinkers to first recognize what is needed to answer, settle or solve it and then evaluate solutions or conclusions. In other words, before you can agree with or disagree with a statement, you must clearly understand it. Quranic critical thinkers first understand the sign(s) and then make a discerning judgment. They then are able to ask the appropriate questions that would lead to understanding and evaluating the situation.

HISTORY

God sends a messenger, who is an angel, to reveal by His command what He will. This takes different forms, which the Prophet explained as follows:

1. The angel would impart to him something he recognized within himself, without seeing the angel. The Prophet said: The Holy Spirit has imparted to me that no soul will ever die until it has had whatever provisions assigned to it. Therefore, remain God-conscious and moderate your requests.

2. The angel would come to the Prophet in the form of a person who spoke to him and made sure that he understood what was being said to him.

3. The angel would give him the revelation in a way that sounded like a bell ringing in his ear. This was the hardest form for the Prophet. He would be perspiring even on a very cold day. If he was riding a camel, his camel would fall to the ground. Once he received revelation in this way when he was seated, with his thigh next to that of Zayd ibn Thabit who felt then that his bone was almost broken.

4. The Prophet would see the angel in the angel's own form, giving him whatever God bid him give. Such were the different forms of contact and revelation. (42:51) He bestows His revelation from on high, to whomever He chooses, according to His wisdom.

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Zayd ibn Thabit witnessed such a great moment. Other companions of the Prophet saw it on many occasions, recognizing the fact as they looked at the Prophet. They left him alone to receive whatever he received. When it was over, he was with them just as he was before.

Then, what sort of special nature distinguishes the human soul that makes this contact with the sublime? What is the element within the human soul that enables it to be the recipient of revelation from

on high? This is yet another issue. In what way did the Prophet's soul, which is a human soul, feel this contact and how did it open its receptive faculties to revelation? How did it feel the universe in those moments when God opened His glory to it, with His words resounding in its every corner?

What care, what grace, what honor are bestowed on the human being, such a small creature, when God in His glory confers on him what enlightens his way ahead and keeps him on the right track? Such honor appears great indeed when we remember that, compared to God's kingdom, a person looks more insignificant than a mosquito compared to him.

The Quran describes the Prophets soul prior to revelation in this way. The Prophet had heard of revelation and faith before, because the Arabs were aware of other communities that had scriptures and believed in a well-defined faith. It is not the mere knowledge of such matters that this statement refers to. The reference here is to how revelation affected the Prophet's heart and conscience and how he interacted with it. He certainly experienced nothing of this before this spirit was revealed to him by God's command.

QURANIC CHAPTER 42: THE CONSULTATION (AL-SHURA)
SIGNS 42:44-42:53

Makkah: *And whomever God causes to go astray*
has no protector apart from Him.
And you will see the ones who are unjust
when they would see the punishment.
They will say: Is there any way of turning it back? (42:44)
And you will see them being presented to it
as ones who are humbled by a sense of humility
looking on with secretive glances.
And those who believed will say:
Truly, the ones who are losers are those who lost themselves
and their people on the Day of Resurrection.
Truly, the ones who are unjust will be
in an abiding punishment (42:45)
that there had not been for them
any protector to help them other than God.
And he whom God causes to go astray,
there is not for him any way. (42:46)
Respond to the call of your Lord before a Day approaches
for which there is no turning back from God.
There will be no shelter for you on that Day,

nor is there for you any refusal. (42:47)
But if they turned aside, We put you not forward
as a guardian over them.
It is for you not but the delivering of the message.
And, truly, when We caused the human being
to experience mercy from Us, he was glad in it.
But when evil deeds light on him
—because of what his hands sent—
then, truly, the human being is ungrateful. (42:48)
To God belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth.
He creates what He wills. He bestows females on whom He wills.
And He bestows males on whom He wills. (42:49)
And He couples them, males and females.
And He makes barren whom He wills.
Truly, He is Knowing, Powerful. (42:50)
And it had not been for a mortal that God speak to him,
but by revelation or from behind a partition
or that He send a Messenger to reveal
by His permission what He wills.
Truly, He is Lofty, Wise. (42:51)
And, thus, We revealed to you the Spirit of Our command.
You had not been informed what the Book is nor what is belief,
but We made it a light by which We guide
whomever We will of Our servants.
And, truly, you, you guide to a straight path— (42:52)
the path of God, to whom belongs whatever is in the heavens
and whatever is in and on the earth.
Truly, will not all affairs come home to God? (42:53)

COMMENTARY°

The second part, taking up the rest of the chapter, begins with a discussion of God's signs that are seen in the way He gives some people abundant provision while others receive small measure, how He sends rainfall, the creation of the heavens and the earth with all creatures therein, and ships that traverse the sea. It then moves on to outline the basic quality that distinguishes believers and their community. This is followed by an image of the Day of Judgment showing the wrongdoers as they face their punishment: (42:44-42:45)

He whom God lets go astray will have no one else to protect him. (42:44-42:46)

What God wills is certain to take place. No one can change a course God has determined. (42:44-42:45)

By contrast, the believers will be in a dignified position, stating the fate that the wrongdoers face: (42:47) Then the chapter reverts to its central theme, the truth of revelation and message, highlighting one of its many aspects: (42:48)

The chapter continues to refer to its central theme, directly and indirectly, up to its end and moves after each reference to address other ideas relating to it. Its conclusion provides the following statement regarding revelation and message: (42:52-42:53)

What God wills is certain to take place. No one can change a course God has determined. (42:44-42:45)

Now the section addresses those who stubbornly opposed the Prophet's message with an order to respond to their Lord before such a fate comes upon them, all of a sudden, when they will be without support. A directive to the Prophet is added instructing him to turn away from them if they persist in their rejection. His task though is only to deliver his message; he is not responsible for anyone: (42:47-44:48)

By way of comment on this, the section makes absolutely clear that whatever happiness or misfortune, affluence or scarcity befalls a person is determined by God. It is very strange therefore for someone, who reacts in this way to blessings and misfortune, to turn away from God when He holds all the strings affecting his life: (42:49-42:50)

Revelation is indeed a reality, but a sublime one. It appears to rise to a high and distant horizon which our faculties can hardly perceive. (42:52-42:53)

It was by means of such contact that revelation was given to the Prophet: (40:52) The process was the same as revelation granted to earlier messengers, bringing to the Prophet a spirit that gives life to souls, motivating them to act and implement the divine message. *And, truly, **you**, **you** have guided to a straight path*—(42:52)

This is the total nature of the message given through this revelation. It is a light that imparts happiness to those hearts that are guided by it. (42:52-42:53) Special emphasis is placed here on relating guidance to God's will, making it clear that He alone grants it only to whom He will on the basis of His own knowledge, shared with no one else. The Prophet is only the means chosen to fulfil God's will. He does not initiate guidance in peoples hearts. He only delivers God's message which opens the way to the fulfilment of God's will.

Guidance shows us the path of God, at which point all ways converge, because it leads to the Sovereign who alone has dominion over the heavens and the earth. Whoever is guided to His path is certain

to know the laws that God has set in operation in the universe, bringing their forces into play and providing sustenance to all. Therefore, the whole universe turns to its Supreme Owner to whom all shall return: *Truly, will not all affairs come home to God?* (42:53) He will then judge them all. Such is the light God has given so that people will go along the way He has chosen for them; they will return to Him having obeyed His command and benefited by His guidance.

Thus the chapter is brought to its conclusion. It began with a discussion of revelation, which provided its main theme. It stated that revelation started with the early prophets, making it clear that divine religion is one, outlining the same code and showing the same way. It gives humanity its new leadership represented by the person of Muhammad and in the community that believes in his message. This community is entrusted with the task of guiding people to the straight path leading to God. The chapter also outlines the characteristics of this community which qualify it to provide sound leadership. It is this community that shoulders the trust bestowed from on high by the sublime process of revelation.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QUESTIONS

The following questions may help you in understanding purpose, aim, goal, objective.

Is the purpose of these signs clear?
What would someone who disagreed with this do?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I thoroughly understand the requirements of the Quranic Studies class, how it is taught and what is expected of me.
I was able to ask questions about the grading policies and for advice on how best to prepare for class?
I feel I was an active learner?
I was able to work ideas into my thinking by active reading, writing, speaking, and listening?

LESSON 63(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY CLARIFYING AND ANALYZING THE MEANINGS OF WORDS OR PHRASES

Critical thinkers of Quranic studies have clear thoughts about the Quranic signs. They perceive the concepts and recognize what kind of evidence is needed to analyze the meaning of Quranic words. They know that just giving a definition is not sufficient. They must also be able to give examples of the Quranic concept. On the other hand, uncritical thinkers see words drifting through their minds. They are not able to give examples of the concepts of the words or to critique their use of the concept.

God reveals the truth in the Quran in a variety of ways, some explicit and others by allusion, the latter mainly through the modality of the signs, in order to provoke and engage the human intellect. The signs of God cannot be read just from the face of the signs, but require thinking and reflection. This is indicated in the phrase: *We shall cause them to see Our signs* ... which suggests that the signs may not be instantaneously visible to the naked eye. The whole concept of the signs seeks to forge a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We have sent forth to you ... so that you may meditate on its signs, and those imbued with intuition may recollect.* (38: 29) A sign is also a portent and allusion to something other than itself and should not therefore be seen as the final message and purpose of the revelation containing it.

GUIDE: When giving examples and discussing them, you should begin with the clearest and most obvious cases and their opposite. Once your class has discussed them at length can more controversial or difficult concepts be discussed.

QURANIC CHAPTER 43: THE ORNAMENTS (AL-ZUKHRUF) SIGNS 43:1-43:15

Makkah: *Ha Mim.* (43:1)
By the clear Book, (43:2)
We, truly, made it an Arabic Recitation
so that perhaps you will be reasonable. (43:3)
Truly, it is in the essence of the Book
from Our Presence, Lofty, Wise. (43:4)
Will We turn away the Remembrance from you,
overlooking as you had been a folk,
ones who are excessive? (43:5)
And how many a Prophet
sent We among the ancient ones! (43:6)
And approaches them not a Prophet,
but that they had been ridiculing him. (43:7)

Then, We caused to perish
the more vigorous in courage
than them and the example of the ancient ones passed. (43:8)
And, certainly, if you asked them:
Who created the heavens and the earth?
They will, certainly, say:
The Almighty, The Knowing created them, (43:9)
Who made the earth a cradle for you
and made in it ways for you
so that perhaps you would be truly guided (43:10)
and Who sent down water from heaven in measure.
Then, We revived with it a lifeless land.
Thus, you are brought out. (43:11)
And it is He Who created all the pairs
and assigned for you the boats
and the flocks on which you ride (43:12)
so that you sit upon their backs.
And, again, remember the divine blessing of your Lord
when you are seated on them and you say:
Glory be to Him Who caused this to be subservient to us
and we had not been ones who are equal to it! (43:13)
And, truly, we, certainly, are to our Lord
ones who are turning. (43:14)
Yet they assigned with Him a part of some of His servants.
Truly, the human being is clearly ungrateful. (43:15)

COMMENTARY°

God states this oath by the two letters and the clear book so as to confirm the purpose of making this Quran in the form it was made when revealed to the Arabs: *We, truly, made it an Arabic Recitation so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (43:3) The purpose, then, is that they should understand it as it is composed in their own tongue. The Quran is God's revelation which He has made, in its spoken form, Arabic as He chose the Arabs to be the bearers of His message. Moreover, God made His choice on the basis of His knowledge that the Arabs were suitable message-bearers and that their language could best express it. God knows whom to entrust with His message.

He then defines what position He has assigned for the Quran with Him and its value in His overall plan for the universe: *Truly, it is in the essence of the Book from Our Presence, Lofty, Wise.* (43:4) We will only in passing refer to the literal meaning of the phrase 'the essence of the Book'. Does it refer to the imperishable tablet men-

tioned elsewhere in the Quran, or to God's eternal knowledge? Both are the same in the sense that they do not have a specific meaning within our sphere of knowledge. Yet the sign transmits a definite impression that the Quran has an especially high value in God's overall knowledge and planning. This is enough for us. The Quran is sublime and full of wisdom. These two qualities give it a specific rationality, and indeed it is so! It is as if the Quran has a soul of its own, with special features and qualities, that respond to the souls of those who interact with it. With its sublime position and wisdom, it provides guidance to humanity, leading it according to its own nature and qualities, imparting to its rational understanding and to its life values, concepts and facts that are also sublime and bear wisdom.

When this fact has been established it makes the people who speak the language in which the Quran has been revealed appreciate the great gift and blessing God has given them. It shows them the extent of their transgression when they turn away from it in disdain. It is they who deserve to be treated with contempt. Therefore, they are told that they may well be ignored because of their transgression: *Will We turn away the Remembrance from you, overlooking as you had been a folk, ones who are excessive?* (43:5)

It is indeed most remarkable that God, in His glory and sublimity, should care for such people, revealing to them a book in their own tongue, telling them about what they feel, explaining the inner aspects of their lives, showing them the path delineated by His guidance, relating to them accounts of earlier communities and reminding them of God's law that was in effect during ancient times. Yet they continue to ignore His guidance, turning away from it. For God to say that they will be deprived of His care and be ignored for their transgression sounds dreadful.

In addition to this threat, they are reminded of God's law that applied to earlier communities that denied the prophets sent to them: *And how many a Prophet sent We among the ancient ones! And approaches them not a Prophet, but that they had been ridiculing him. Then, We caused to perish the more vigorous in courage than them and the example of the ancient ones passed.* (43:6-43:8) What can they expect when God has already destroyed people that were much mightier than they because of their derision of the messengers sent to them?

The Arabs had a faith, which we can imagine as consisting of remnants of the original pure faith of Abraham, that had lost its original shining colors, intermingled with legends. What remained was something that human nature could not deny, namely, that the universe has a Creator who is God: the universe could not have existed

without a Creator and the Creator could only be God. Yet, the Arabs did not take this natural truth to its logical conclusion; they simply stopped at the bare fact: *And, certainly, if you had asked them: Who created the heavens and the earth? They will, certainly, say: The Almighty, The Knowing created them.* (43:9)

The section takes them another step forward in outlining God's attributes and the favors He has given them: *Who made the earth a cradle for you and made in it ways for you so that perhaps you would be truly guided.* (43:10) Smoothing out the earth is a fact understood, in one way or another, by everyone. The people who were the first to be addressed by the Quran would have seen the earth smooth under their feet when they walked, ready for plants to grow. It is smoothed out generally for life to grow. However, we realize this today in a more profound way, taking into account what we have learned about the nature of the earth and its history. Future generations will understand this fact in an even greater way; human knowledge will continue to expand and discover new facts that have so far remained unknown.

The section then looks a step further at the process of life and the emergence of living creatures: *And Who sent down water from heaven in measure. Then, We revived with it a lifeless land. Thus, you are brought out.* (43:11)

We learn from this section that the ungrateful used to assign a portion of their cattle to God and another portion to other beings. God, however, created cattle as one of the favors He bestows on man: people ride cattle as they ride on ships and they should appreciate His blessings and give thanks: (43:12-43:14)

This: *And it is He Who created all the pairs and assigned for you the boats and the flocks on which you ride* (43:12) is to remind us that God has placed us in charge of the earth, putting at our disposal its considerable and varied power and potential. It also invites us to show gratitude for God's choice and blessings, reminds us of the One who grants blessings every time such a blessing is enjoyed. Such expressions of gratitude for God's blessings is sure to keep our hearts alive to their bond with God at every turn in life.

We certainly cannot match His blessings. *And, again, remember the divine blessing of your Lord when you are seated on them and you say: Glory be to Him Who caused this to be subservient to us and we had not been ones who are equal to it!* (43:13) All that we can do is to be truly grateful and give due thanks for all that He has favored us with. We should realize that we will eventually return to God after our term in charge of the earth comes to its end. He will then requite us for what we have done in life when we enjoyed His

favors and what He placed at our service: *And, truly, we, certainly, are to our Lord ones who are turning.* (43:14) Such are the refined manners people should adopt towards God who has granted us countless favors and blessings. Yet we tend to forget Him even when we are enjoying His favors. Therefore, this gentle reminder.

Yet they assign to Him some of His own servants as offspring. Surely a person is clearly bereft of all gratitude? *Yet they assigned with Him a pare of some of His servants. Truly, the human being is clearly ungrateful.* (43:15)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

EXAMINE IN DEPTH

The sacred text should be examined in depth.

Why does the sacred text tell you about the importance of knowledge?
Why does the Quranic message think this (concept, skill, procedure, step) is worth knowing?
Why does the sacred text tell you to do this?
What would happen if you didn't?

8 STAGES OF WRITING

1. Diagram: For a question which specifies a diagram you should present a drawing, chart, plan, or graphic representation in your answer. Generally you are expected to label the diagram and in some cases add a brief explanation or description.

2. Discuss: The term discuss, which appears often in essay questions, directs you to examine, analyze carefully, and present considerations pro and con regarding the problems or items involved. This type of question calls for a complete and entailed answer.

3. Enumerate: The word enumerate specifies a list or outline form of reply. In such questions you should recount, one by one, in concise form, the points required.

4. Evaluate: In an evaluation question you are expected to present a careful appraisal of the problem stressing both advantages and limitations. Evaluation implies authoritative and, to a lesser degree, personal appraisal of both con-

tributions and limitations.

5. Explain: In explanatory answers it is imperative that you clarify and interpret the material you present. In such an answer it is best to state the how or why, reconcile any differences in opinion or experimental results, and, where possible, state causes. The aim is to make plain the conditions which give rise to whatever you are examining.

6. Illustrate: A question which asks you to illustrate usually requires you to explain or clarify your answer to the problem by presenting a figure, picture, diagram, or concrete example.

7. Interpret: An interpretation question is similar to one requiring explanation. You are expected to translate, exemplify, solve, or comment upon the subject and usually to give your judgment or reaction to the problem.

8. Justify: When you are instructed to justify your answer, you must prove or show grounds for decisions. In such an answer, evidence should be presented in convincing form.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I studied the signs as a way to begin to think Quranically. (Since you are in a Quranic Studies class, your goal should be to think Quranically.)

I was able to ask questions.

I engaged myself in lectures and discussions by asking questions.

By asking questions, I realized that I discovered what I did and did not know.

LESSON 63(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY READING CRITICALLY: CLARIFYING OR DISCERNING THE SACRED TEXT

Critical thinkers read with a healthy skepticism. But they do not doubt or deny until they understand. They clarify before they judge. They expect intelligibility from what they read. Critical readers ask themselves questions as they read, wonder about the implications of, reasons for, examples of, and meaning of the sacred text. They do not approach written material as a collection of sentences, but as a whole, trying out various interpretations until one fits all of the sign or signs, rather than ignoring or distorting statements that don't fit their interpretation.

> According to al-Ghazzali, our beliefs arise from our intellect (*aql*). According to traditional sources, thought is the power of the mind (heart) that facilitates knowledge. Based on this definition, thinking: is the movement of that power that is driven by the intellect. It can only occur when an initial image of the subject is attainable in the mind of the thinker.
>
> Further, the Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the sacred text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge espoused with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression understands the religion, signifying a rational and inquisitive approach to constructing a worldview of Islam. Islam, in other words, advises analytical knowledge and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely dogmatic approach. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions faith based on detailed analysis as opposed to undigested and un-comprehended faith. The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the clerics of all the leading schools of thought....
>
> Thus, if there are hadith reports, or any factual reports for that matter, which do not stand to reason and understanding, they would be most likely discounted and abandoned, with the exception only of devotional matters (*ibadat*) which are based on faith and submission more than on rational analysis....
>
> Another feature of the Quranic vision of thinking is indicated in its emphasis on wisdom and good judgment (*hikmah*) which signifies the quality of thinking, its regard for values, and its outcome. Wisdom and good judgment can easily be said to be more important than technical know-how and expertise, as it can guide expert knowledge

as to its proper application and the attainment of excellence.

The Quran mentions *hikmah* twenty times, and in about ten of these it is immediately preceded by the word *kitab*, which is a reference to divine scripture—primarily the Quran, but also other divinely revealed scriptures. The text thus says with reference to Jesus that God Most High will teach him the Scripture and wisdom (*hikmah*), the Torah and the Gospel....

The juxtaposition of book and wisdom is often contextualized by a reference to the sending of prophets who teach the people and guide them with scripture and wisdom as it is said of the Prophet Muhammad (as well as) ... the descendants of Prophet Abraham.

The holistic, superior, and indivisible value of *hikmah* in the Quran is underscored in one of its verses to the effect that when God bestows wisdom on someone that person is indeed granted an immense source of goodness.... To mention wisdom together with the Book evidently means that the Quran should be read with wisdom and divorcing the one from the other by taking a totally dogmatic approach to the Quran goes against the divine purpose and intention of its revelation. To read the Quran in the light of wisdom thus means a comprehensive reading that reaches beyond the obvious meaning of its words to encapsulate the goal and purpose of its message and then also reflection on the ways and means of how its benefits can be realized for the individual and society.[2]

QURANIC CHAPTER 43: THE ORNAMENTS (AL-ZUKHRUF) SIGNS 43:16-43:25

Makkah: *Or took He to Himself*
daughters from what
He creates and selected He sons for you? (43:16)
And if good tidings were given to one of them
of what he cited as an example from The Merciful, his face stayed
one that is clouded over and he chokes. (43:17)
Is whoever is brought up amid glitter one who is
without clarity when he is in an altercation? (43:18)
And made they the angels—who themselves
are servants of The Merciful— females?
Bore they witness to their creation?
Their giving testimony will be written down.
And they will be asked about it. (43:19)
And they would say: If willed The Merciful,
we would not have worshiped them.
And they have no knowledge of that.

They do nothing but guess. (43:20)
Or gave We them any Book before this
so they are ones who hold fast to it? (43:21)
Nay! They said: We found our fathers in a community
holding to a way of life and we are, truly,
in their footsteps ones who are truly guided. (43:22)
And, thus, We sent not a warner to any town before you
without ones who are given ease saying:
We found our fathers in a community.
We are, certainly, ones who imitate their footsteps. (43:23)
He said: Even if I brought about better guidance for you
than what you found your fathers on.
They would say: Truly, we, in that with which you were sent
are ones who disbelieve. (43:24)
So We requited them. Then, look on how had been
the Ultimate End of the ones who deny. (43:25)

COMMENTARY°

God's offspring: *Or took He to Himself daughters from what He creates and selected He sons for you?* (43:16) If God were to take offspring for Himself, why would He choose females and give the males to them? This is nothing less than absurd and especially when they are so distressed when a daughter is born to them. *And if good tidings were given to one of them of what he cited as an example from The Merciful, his face stayed one that is clouded over and he chokes.* (43:17)

What sort of manners are these that make them attribute to God what would fill them with gloom? Indeed, they would be so distressed about parenting a daughter that they could not even face speaking about it. In their environment, it was only brave men who could fight hard in battle that were looked upon with esteem. How come, then, that they assign to God offspring of the type which only cares about jewellery and fine things, unable to refute an argument or fight a case? *Is whoever is brought up amid glitter one who is without clarity when he is in an altercation?* (43:18) Here we see how the chapter uses their own logic, making them ashamed of attributing to God what they themselves hate to father. Should they not, if at all, have attributed to Him what scores highly in their own estimation?

The chapter then refutes another of their absurd superstitions. They alleged that the angels were female. On what basis do they make such a claim? *And made they the angels—who themselves are servants of The Merciful—females? Bore they witness to their cre-*

ation? Their giving testimony will be written down. And they will be asked about it. (43:19)

The ungrateful provide further argument to justify their absurdities, but once again the chapter exposes how flawed their statements are: *And they would say: If willed The Merciful, we would not have worshiped them. And they have no knowledge of that. They do nothing but guess.* (43:20)

When they attribute their own choice to God's will, this is nothing less than wild conjecture. They cannot be certain that God wants them to worship the angels. How can they achieve such certainty? (43:20) They simply indulge in guesswork and delusion. *Or gave We them any Book before this so they are ones who hold fast to it?* (43:21) Do they have such a book as a basis for their claims, giving them clear evidence in support of their worship?

At this point, the section exposes the reality on which they rely when holding to their absurd superstition that makes them offer false worship: *Nay! They said: We found our fathers in a community holding to a way of life and we are, truly, in their footsteps ones who are truly guided.* (43:22) This is a ludicrous and baseless argument. It shows them to be content to follow their ancestors without thinking about or looking into the basis of their actions. Thus, they are no more than a herd of cattle driven to where it does not know. They are totally unaware of their destination or whether they are following the road leading to it.

At the end of this passage, the ungrateful are shown the fates of earlier communities that argued in the same vein and blindly followed their forefathers' footsteps, rejecting the truth clearly presented to them by God's messengers: *So We requited them. Then, look on how had been the Ultimate End of the ones who deny.* (43:25)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QUESTIONS

Feel free to raise questions about passages you read.

What does one of the previous signs say?
What does it imply?

Assume? Explain it.
Does it contradict anything you know or suspect to be true?
How do you know?
How could you find out?
Does this fit in with your experience? In what way? Why or why not?
What might someone who disagreed with it say?
Does the text leave out relevant information?
Does it favor one perspective? Which?
Why do you suppose it was written this way?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I feel free to raise questions about the meaning of the Quranic signs I read.
I can discuss my interpretations of what I read.

LESSON 63(3). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY

LISTENING CRITICALLY: THE ART OF SILENT DIALOGUE

Critical thinkers know that listening can either be done passively and uncritically or actively and critically. This is the case whether you are listening to the Quran in a language you understand or listening to your teacher's lesson. You know that it is not easy to understand what the Quranic text or another person is saying and then to integrate those thoughts into your own. When we compare speaking and listening, we know that when we speak, we hold on to our own ideas. We are able to arrange them in some order. We express our thoughts with which we are familiar. Listening to another, however is more difficult. In listening, we have to take the words we are hearing and translate them into our own words and ideas for them to make sense. We have not experienced the same things as the speaker. It is difficult to anticipate where the speaker's words are taking them. You have to be attentive to what the other person is saying. All of this requires active listening. Developing into an active listener requires time and practice. It also requires asking key questions.

QURANIC CHAPTER 43: THE ORNAMENTS (AL-ZUKHRUF)

SIGNS 43:26-43:35

Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (43:26)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (43:27)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (43:28)
Nay! I gave enjoyment
to these and to their fathers
until The Truth drew near them and a clear Messenger. (43:29)
And when The Truth drew near them, they said:
This is sorcery and we are ones who disbelieve in it. (43:30)
They said: Why was this, the Quran, not sent down
to some eminent man of the two towns? (43:31)
Would they divide the mercy of your Lord?
It is We Who divided out among them
their livelihood in this present life.
Exalted are some of them above some others in degree so that
some take to themselves others in their bondage.
And the mercy of your Lord
is better than what they gather. (43:32)
And were it not that humanity be one community,
would We have made for whoever is ungrateful for The Merciful,
roofs of silver for their houses, and stairways
which they would scale up (43:33)
and for their houses, doors, and couches
on which they would recline (43:34)

and ornaments? Yet all this would have been nothing,
but enjoyment of this present life.
And the world to come with your Lord is
for the ones who are God-conscious. (43:35)

COMMENTARY°

In this section of the chapter, the Arabs are made to see this historical fact so that they might check their claims against it. The chapter also reports their objections to the Prophet Muhammad's message: *They said: Why was this, the Quran, not sent down to some eminent man of the two towns?* (43:31) It shows the basic flaw in this argument: not only does it disregard the true values on which God wants human life to be based but it also espouses false values which turn them away from true guidance. Once the truth is outlined, the chapter tells them of the fate of those who prefer to remain blind to God's remembrance. It also explains why such a choice was made which boils down to nothing less than following what Satan whispers. At the end of this section, the chapter consoles God's messenger, who is grieved by their choice. He is told that he cannot make the blind see nor the deaf hear. They will have their due requital, whether he lives to see how God punishes them or God chooses to delay such punishment. He is directed, therefore, to hold fast to what is revealed to him as it represents the truth preached by all former messengers.

The truth, which is always clearly manifest, cannot be confused with sorcery. What they said was conjecture and they were the first to know that it was false. The elders of the Quraysh could not have been blind to the truth of the message of the Quran, yet they aimed to deceive the masses: first by alleging that it was sorcery and secondly by reaffirming their rejection of it: *And when The Truth drew near them, they said: This is sorcery and we are ones who disbelieve in it.* (43:30) In this way, they sought to impress the masses by showing themselves to be confident of what they said. Like all who are deluded, the masses would then follow them. What the Quraysh elders feared most was that they might lose their influence over people. Should the people see the truth of the principle of God's Oneness, no leader would have any influence except within the framework of worshipping God alone.

The Quran describes their confused values and standards as they objected to the choice of Muhammad as the one to bring them light and the message of the truth: *They said: Why was this, the Quran, not sent down to some eminent man of the two towns?* (43:31) The two cities they referred to were Makkah and Taif. The Prophet belonged to the most distinguished family in the clan of Hashim of the

Quraysh tribe, which were the elite among Arabs. He was also known to be a person of high principles and fine manners, even before he was chosen as God's messenger. However, he was not a tribal chief, while his environment placed much store on such considerations. Therefore, their objection: *They said: Why was this, the Quran, not sent down to some eminent man of the two towns?* (43:31)

With their narrow view of worldly pleasures and lack of awareness of the nature of the divine message, the Arabs objected to the choice of Muhammad as God's messenger, suggesting that a recognized leader of either of the two cities would have been preferable. The chapter denounces their objections and reminds them of how God bestows His grace on whomever He chooses of His servants. It shows the flaw inherent in their concepts which confuse worldly values with divine ones. It also makes clear to them how their values score in God's accurate measure: *Would they divide the mercy of your Lord? It is We Who divided out among them their livelihood in this present life.* (43:32)

How singular! What business do they have in apportioning Gods grace when they cannot even determine their own provisions? Whatever comes their way of earthly provisions is determined by God, according to His wisdom and how He wants life on earth to progress: *Exalted are some of them above some others in degree so that some take to themselves others in their bondage. And the mercy of your Lord is better than what they gather.* (43:32)

Earthly values are so petty and insignificant that had God so willed, He would have given them in plenty to those who disbelieve in Him. The only reason behind not doing so is that such plenty would then become a source of delusion, preventing many people from accepting the divine faith: (43:33-43:35)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

GUIDE TO LISTENING CRITICALLY

Listen carefully to what the Quranic signs are saying.
Take them seriously.
Look for reasons and evidence among them.
Recognize and reflect on any assumptions.

Discover implications and consequences.
Seek examples and analogies to them.
Seek to distinguish what one knows from what one merely assumes.
Seek to enter empathetically into the perspectives of others.
Be on the alert for inconsistencies, vagueness and other possible problems in thought in your classroom discussions.
Maintain a healthy sense of skepticism.

It is important to engage in an assignment that actually teaches critical listening. This will help you learn how to listen critically to what others are saying or asking you to do. You have to understand the assignment well in order to do a good job in following it. You can describe discussions on videotapes about the Quran in writing, then compare your version in small groups with others, trying to accurately reconstruct what you heard. Whenever possible, you should watch the piece a second time to verify what you heard or settle conflicting accounts of what you heard and what others heard. While watching a video, take notes. Afterward, compare and discuss your notes with your classmates. A leader of your group could every few minutes stop the video and have you outline the main point and raise critical questions.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to study and learn skills that I had not been good at.
I practice these skills whenever possible.
I am able to recognize and correct your weaknesses because I know this is a sign of gaining strong thinking skills

LESSON 63(4). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY

RAISING QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, ISSUES

Critical thinkers constantly ask themselves questions. Take the example of al-Ghazzali who writes in *Deliverance from Error:*

> So I began by saying to myself: What I seek is knowledge of the true meaning of things. Of necessity, therefore, I must inquire into just what the true meaning of knowledge is.
>
> Then it became clear to me that sure and certain knowledge is that in which the thing known is made so manifest that no doubt clings to it, nor is it accompanied by the possibility of error and deception, nor can the mind even suppose such a possibility. Furthermore, safety from error must accompany the certainty to such a degree that, if someone proposed to show it to be false—for example, a man who would turn a stone into gold and a stick into a snake — his feat would not induce any doubt or denial. For if I know that ten is more than three, and then someone were to say: No, on the contrary, three is more than ten, as is proved by my turning this stick into a snake—and if he were to do just that and I were to see him do it, I would not doubt my knowledge because of his fear. The only effect it would have on me would be to make me wonder how he could do such a thing. But there would be no doubt at all about what I knew!
>
> I realized, then, that whatever I did not know in this way and was not certain of with this kind of certainty was unreliable and unsure knowledge, and that every knowledge unaccompanied by safety from error is not sure and certain knowledge.
>
> I then scrutinized all my cognitions and found myself devoid of any knowledge answering the previous description except in the case of sense-data and the self- evident truths. So I said: Now that despair has befallen me, the only hope I have of acquiring an insight into obscure matters is to start from things that are perfectly clear, namely sense-data and the self-evident truths. Hence I must first study these thoroughly in order to reach a sure answer to these questions: Is my reliance on sense-data and my safety from error in the case of self-evident truths of the same kind as that which I formerly had regarding the dicta of authority, and of the same kind as that which most men have regarding speculative matters? Or is it a verifiable safety containing no deception or danger?
>
> With great earnestness, therefore, I began to reflect on my sense-data to see if I could make myself doubt them. This protracted effort to induce doubt finally brought me to the point where my soul would

not allow me to admit safety from error even in the case of my sense-data. Rather it began to be open to doubt about them and to say: Whence comes your reliance on sense-data? The strongest of the senses is the sense of sight. Now this looks at a shadow and sees it standing still and motionless and judges that motion must be denied. Then, due to experience and observation, an hour later it knows that the shadow is moving, and that it did not move in a sudden spurt, but so gradually and imperceptibly that it was never completely at rest. Sight also looks at a star and sees it as something small, the size of a dinar: then geometrical proofs demonstrate that it surpasses the earth in size. In the case of this and of similar instances of sense-data the sense-judge makes its judgments, but the reason-judge refutes it and repeatedly gives it the lie in an incontrovertible fashion.[3]

QURANIC CHAPTER 43: THE ORNAMENTS (AL-ZUKHRUF) SIGNS 43:36-43:45

Makkah: *And whoever withdraws*
from the Remembrance of The Merciful,
We allotted for him a satan, so he is a comrade for him. (43:36)
And, truly, they bar them from the way, but they assume
that they are ones who are truly guided. (43:37)
Then, when he drew near us he would say.
Would that there were a distance between me
*and between **you** of two sunrises!*
Miserable was the comrade. (43:38)
And it will never profit you this Day as you did wrong.
You will be ones who are partners in the punishment. (43:39)
*So have **you** caused someone unwilling to hear, to hear*
*or will **you** guide the unwilling to see,*
or someone who had been clearly going astray? (43:40)
*And even if We take **you** away,*
We will, truly, be ones who requite them (43:41)
*or We will cause **you** to see what We promised them.*
Then, We are ones who are omnipotent over them. (43:42)
*So hold **you** fast to what was revealed to thee.*
*Truly, **you** are on a straight path.* (43:43)
*And, truly, this is a remembrance for **you** and **your** folk.*
And you will be asked. (43:44)
Jerusalem: *And ask ones whom We sent before **you***
of Our Messengers:
Made We gods other than the Merciful to be worshiped? (43:45)

COMMENTARY°

The chapter moves on to explain the fate of those who are given plenty of the luxuries of this world but who remain unmindful of their duty of obedience to God and glorifying Him so as to deserve the great prize He grants on the Day of Judgement to those who fear Him: (43:36-43:39)

In the Arabic text, this sign is stated in the conditional form to express a consistent rule that makes the result inevitable when the cause occurs. Thus the evil comrade will certainly turn his comrade away from the right path, even though such a person may continue to think that he is on the right track: *And, truly, they bar them from the way, but they assume that they are ones who are truly guided.* (43:37) The end comes all of a sudden while they are still deluded: (43:38)

As the curtain drops on them both, we hear a word that crushes all hope for them: (43:39) The suffering of each is given in full measure. It is not something to share out among them so as to reduce its effect.

The chapter now addresses the Prophet with a word of consolation so that he does not grieve about those who turned away from him, disbelieving in his message. It encourages him to hold on to the truth revealed to him from on high, as it is the same word of truth given to every Messenger of God: (43:40-43:45)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions,** (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

DEVELOP QUESTIONS ABOUT QUESTIONS

Who can best phrase this question?
Is there another way to put this question?
What is the advantage of putting the question this way?
How would you put the question?
How does the Quran teach us to think critically?
What is the question I am trying to answer?
Can I put the question in a better way?
Is the question I am asking clear? or too complex?
How do you evaluate the question?

What would need to be done to answer this question?
How can we find out?
What does this question assume?
Would x put the question differently?
How could someone settle this question?
Can we break this question down at all?
Is the question clear? Do we understand it?
Is this question easy or hard to answer? Why?
Does this question ask us to evaluate something?
Do we all agree that this is the question?
To answer this question, what questions would we have to answer first?
I'm not sure I understand how you are interpreting the main question at issue.
Is this the same issue as x?
How would x put the issue?
Why is this question important?
How does the Quran describe the just person?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I loved learning how to ask questions.
I was able to ask questions in class.
I incorporated questions into my papers.
I realized that 1/6th of the Quran are questions.
I hope to study them and learn more about them over time.

Quranic Chapter 43: The Ornaments (al-Zukhruf)
Signs 43:46-43:56

Makkah: Book 27: Moses (43:46)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (43:47)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (43:48)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (43:49)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (43:50)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (43:51)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (43:52)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (43:53)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (43:54)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (43:55)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (43:56)

LESSON 63(5). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY PRACTICING DISCUSSION: CLARIFYING AND QUESTIONING INTERPRETATIONS

Critical thinkers are questioners. The ability to question and probe deeply, to get down to root ideas, to get beneath the mere appearance of things, is at the very heart of this strategy. Furthermore, critical thinkers are comfortable being questioned. They actually welcome questions. They don't become offended, confused, or intimidated. They welcome good questions as an opportunity to develop a line of thought.

There are many different kinds of questions and moves available to you. Your teacher can use questioning techniques to learn what you and your classmates think, helping you develop your ideas, or as a prelude to evaluation. When confronted with a new idea, you want to understand it, to relate it to your experience, and to determine its implications, consequences, and value. You can fruitfully uncover the structure of your own and others' perspectives. Probing questions are the tools by which these goals are reached.

Quranic critical thinkers are never without questions to ask as the Quranic continuously ask. It is through exploring questions that the sacred text is able to clarify interpretations. Through their questioning, students explore the basic ideas. Going beyond what things appear to be, they not only study Quranic questions, but are able to ask many more themselves.

QURANIC CHAPTER 43: THE ORNAMENTS (AL-ZUKHRUF) SIGNS 43:57-43:67

Makkah: Book 28: Jesus son of Mary (43:57)
Makkah: Book 28: Jesus son of Mary (43:58)
Makkah: Book 28: Jesus son of Mary (43:59)
Makkah: Book 28: Jesus son of Mary (43:60)
Makkah: Book 28: Jesus son of Mary (43:61)
Makkah: Book 28: Jesus son of Mary (43:62)
Makkah: Book 28: Jesus son of Mary (43:63)
Makkah: Book 28: Jesus son of Mary (43:64)

The confederates were at variance among themselves.
So woe to those who did wrong
from the punishment of a painful Day. (43:65)
Looked they on but for the Hour
that will approach them suddenly
whiles they are not aware? (43:66)
Friends on that Day will be enemies
some to some others, but ones who are God-conscious. (43:67)

QURANIC CHAPTER 43: THE ORNAMENTS (AL-ZUKHRUF)

SIGNS 43:68-43:89

O My servants! This Day there shall be
no fear in you
nor will you feel remorse. (43:68)
It will be said to those who believed in Our signs
and had been ones who submit to God: (43:69)
Enter the Garden, you
and your spouses, to be walking with joy! (43:70)
There will be passed around among them
platters of gold and goblets.
And in it will be whatever souls lust for
and all that in which the eyes
delight. And you will be ones who dwell in it forever. (43:71)
This is the Garden that you were given as inheritance
because of what you had been doing. (43:72)
For you there will be much sweet fruit
from which you will eat. (43:73)
Truly, ones who sin will be in the punishment of hell, ones who will
dwell in it forever. (43:74)
It will not be decreased for them and they will be ones who are
seized with despair in it. (43:75)
And We did not wrong them, but they had been
ones who are unjust. (43:76)
And they would cry out: O Malik! Let your Lord finish us.
He would say: Truly, you will be ones who abide. (43:77)
Certainly, We brought about The Truth to you,
but most of you are ones who dislike The Truth. (43:78)
Or fixed they on some affair?
Then, We, too, are ones who fix some affair. (43:79)
Assume they that We hear not their secret thoughts
and their conspiring secretly?
Yea! Our messengers are near them writing down. (43:80)
Say: If The Merciful had had a son, then,
I would be first of the ones who worship. (43:81)
Glory be to the Lord of the heavens and the earth,
the Lord of the Throne, from all that they allege! (43:82)
So let them engage in idle talk and play until they encounter
their Day which they are promised. (43:83)
And it is He Who is in the heaven, God, and on the earth, God.
And He is The Wise, The Knowing. (43:84)
Blessed be He to whom belongs
the dominion of the heavens and the earth
and whatever is between them

and with Whom is the knowledge of the Hour
and to Whom you will be returned. (43:85)
And those whom they call to possess no power
other than Him for intercession,
only whoever bore witness to The Truth, and they know. (43:86)
And if you asked them: Who created them?
They would, certainly, say: God.
Then, how are they mislead? (43:87)
And his saying: O my Lord! Truly,
these are a folk who believe not, (43:88)
so overlook them and say:
Peace. And they will know. (43:89)

COMMENTARY°

When the section refers to wrongdoers, it includes those factions that disputed about Jesus together with the pagan Arabs who argued with the Prophet on the basis of what those factions perpetrated. It draws a long, spectacular scene showing what happens to them on the Day of Judgement and adds an image of what happens to the God-conscious who receive His favors in heaven: What are they waiting for other than the Last Hour, which will come upon them all of a sudden and take them unawares? On that Day, friends will become enemies to one another, except for the God-conscious.

However, what comes over and above desire satisfaction is that it is all pleasant to the eye, adding beauty to gratification: (43:71) Yet there is more to this blessed enjoyment: there is something greater and far more honorable. They are honored by an address from on high: (43:71-43:73)

What fate awaits the evildoers whom we left a little while ago in dispute, blaming one another? (43:74)

No ray of hope will ever appear nor any chance of deliverance. They endure it, lost in despair: (43:75-43:76)

An outcry is heard from afar. It is an outcry of utter distress, born in despair: *And they would cry out: O Malik! Let your Lord finish us. He would say: Truly, you will be ones who abide.*(43:77) This distressing image is followed by an address to those who hate the truth and turn away from guidance. It portrays to all how singular their attitude is: (43:78-43:80)

Now the Quran directs the Prophet to say something to them and to leave them to face the destiny which has already been described to them: (43:81-43:-83)

The chapter continues its glorification of God, the Creator, at-

tributing to Him what is worthy of His Lordship of the heavens and the earth as well as the mighty throne: (43:84-43:86)

This statement confirms the unity of God throughout the universe, making it clear that no one shares this with God Almighty who does everything according to His infinite wisdom and perfect knowledge. The Arabic word *tabarak*, translated here as blessed, carries connotations of greatness and exaltedness above all their perceptions. It is He who is the Lord of the heavens and the earth and all in between. He alone knows the timing of the Last Hour and to Him all creation returns. On that day, when all return to Him, none of those whom they allege as His offspring or partners will have the power of intercession for anyone. None can intercede with Him other than one who knows the truth and bears witness to it. A person who testifies to the truth will not intercede on behalf of any who ever stood in opposition to it.

The chapter then confronts them with something that is ingrained in their nature and concerning which they have no doubt. That is, their Creator is God. How, then, can they associate partners with Him in their worship, and how can they expect that anyone will intercede on behalf of anyone who associated partners with Him: *And if you had asked them: Who created them? They would, certainly, say: God. Then, how are they mislead?* (43:87) How can they ignore the truth testified to by their own nature? How can they allow their behavior to be in conflict with its inevitable result?

As the chapter comes to its close, it highlights the fact that the Prophet turns to his Lord complaining of their rejection of the truth and their disbelief: *And his saying: O my Lord! Truly, these are a folk who believe not.* (43:88) This is given in a special form that implies how keenly the Prophet felt this and how well God received it. The answer from on high is a directive to the Prophet to bear with them and not to care for their rejection. On the contrary, he should forbear and feel his heart content. To this is added an implicit warning to those determined opponents of the truth: *So overlook them and say: Peace. And they will know.* (43:89) The time will come when everything is exposed and they will then know the dreadful fate that awaits them.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

THINK ABOUT:

How to think?
How to expand your ideas before they are evaluated?
How to confront new ideas?
How to relate new ideas to your own experience?
How to determine the implications of your ideas and your consequences?

Have a discussion with a friend or in your classroom. Immediately after your discussion, write for five minutes, summarizing the key points, raising new questions, adding analysis, examples, or clarification. Later these notes could be shared and discussed. To develop your abilities to use questioning if you are in a classroom setting, your teacher could present an idea or passage to you and your classmates and have you brainstorm possible questions. Pairs of you can practice questioning each other about issues raised in study, trading the roles of questioner and questioned. Your teacher may provide lists of possible initial questions and perhaps some follow-up questions. You could also be allowed to continue your discussions another day, after you have had time to think. As you practice questioning, see it modeled, and learn the language, skills, and insights of critical thinking. Your mastery of questioning techniques will increase. The direction and structure of a discussion can be made clearer by periodically summarizing and rephrasing the main points made or by distinguishing the perspectives expressed. To practice exploring the idea of illuminating and probing questioning, you could read and evaluate different kinds of interviews, categorizing the questions asked. You could then list probing follow-up questions that weren't asked, and share your lists and discuss them with your friend or in your classroom. Why would you ask this? How could that be followed up? What would that tell you?

How would your rate yourself? I was able to:

Discover a multiple of ways to ask questions that explore the logic of what we are reading, hearing or thinking.
Explore and question assumptions, judgments, inferences, what may appear to be contradictory or inconsistent.
Question the relevance of what we are studying.
Probe the evidence for and against what others say.
Question myself and others.

LESSON 64(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
REASONING DIALOGICALLY: COMPARING INTERPRETATIONS

Dialogical thinking refers to thinking that involves a dialogue or extended exchange between different points of view. Whenever we consider concepts or issues deeply, we naturally explore their connections to other ideas and issues within different domains or points of view. Critical thinkers need to be able to engage in fruitful, exploratory dialogue, proposing ideas, probing their roots, considering subject matter insights and evidence, testing ideas, and moving between various points of view. When we think, we often engage in dialogue, either inwardly or aloud with others. We need to integrate critical thinking skills into that dialogue so that it is as fruitful as possible. Questioning is one form of dialogical thinking.

Reasoning dialogically means using a thinking that involves a dialogue between different points of view as the Quranic example shows. Deeply explore the connections to the ideas expressed in these Quranic signs. You should be guided to first engaging in an exploratory dialogue where you study the ideas, explore the roots of these ideas, consider the evidence of the subject matter testing the ideas as you move between multiple points of view. You should engage in an inward dialogue with yourself or an outward one with others. You need to learn how to integrate the Quranic critical thinking skills with your dialogue.

QURANIC CHAPTER 44: THE SMOKE (AL-DUKHAN)
SIGNS 44:1-44:29

Makkah: *Ha Mim.* (44:1)
By the clear Book (44:2)
truly, We caused it to descend on a blessed night.
Truly, We had been ones who warn. (44:3)
Every wise command is made clear in it, (44:4)
a command from Us.
Truly, We had been ones who send it (44:5)
*as a mercy from **your** Lord.*
Truly, He is The Hearing, The Knowing, (44:6)
Lord of the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them.
If you had been ones who are certain. (44:7)
There is no god but He. It is He Who gives life and causes to die.
He is your Lord and the Lord of your ancient fathers. (44:8)
Nay! They play in uncertainty. (44:9)
*Then, **you** be on the watch for a Day*
when the heavens will bring a clear smoke (44:10)
overcoming humanity.
This is a painful punishment. (44:11)

Our Lord! Remove you the punishment from us!
Truly, we are ones who believe. (44:12)
What will there be as a reminder for them?
A clear Messenger drew near them. (44:13)
Again, they turned away from him and they said:
He is one who is taught by others,
one who is possessed. (44:14)
Truly, We are ones who remove the punishment for a little.
Truly, you are ones who revert to ingratitude. (44:15)
On the Day when We will seize by force with the greatest attack,
truly, We will be ones who requite. (44:16)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (44:17)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (44:18)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (44:19)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (44:20)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (44:21)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (44:22)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (44:23)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (44:24)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (44:25)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (44:26)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (44:27)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (44:28)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (44:29)

COMMENTARY°

The section begins with the two separate letters, *Ha Mim*, making an oath by them and by the book composed of letters like them, making things clear. We have spoken elsewhere about these separate letters occurring at the beginning of a number of chapters in the Quran. The point to add here is that making them the subject of an oath is just like taking an oath on the book. Every single letter, representing a sound, is a true miracle, or one of Gods signs manifested in mans make-up, giving him the ability to speak. They also identify the order in which alphabetical sounds occur along the vocal tract, the symbol representing the letter and its sound, as also mans ability to gather information through them. All these are significant facts that grow in our minds when we seriously reflect on them.

What the oath asserts is the revelation of the book on a blessed night: (44:3-44:6) The reference to the night on which the Quran was bestowed from on high most probably means—although God knows best—the night when its revelation first started. It was a night during

the month of Ramadan, which is described in the following words: *The month of Ramadan is that in which the Quran was caused to descend.* (2:185) The Quran was not revealed in full on that night, nor was all the Quran revealed during Ramadan. It had only started to make contact with the earth, and that night was the first time such contact was made.

Those who were the first to receive the Quran lived during a remarkable period of history when they were in direct contact with God. He told them what they felt in different situations, making them feel, time after time, that He was looking after them. For their part, they took all this into account, in every move and action they performed, and every thought they entertained. They appealed to Him at every turn, trusting that He would always respond to them.

When that generation passed away, the Quran remained an open book that directly addresses human hearts. When people open themselves to it, its effect surpasses magic. It transforms their feelings in a way that is heard of only in great legends. The Quran has remained ever since a complete and clear system that can establish a model human community in any environment and at any time. What it creates is a type of human life that lives within its local environment and time and adopts the unique Quranic system with all its special qualities. This is the distinctive mark of the divine system, and it applies to everything that God makes. Human beings make what suits them at a particular period of time and in a particular situation. God's work, on the other hand, is perfect, fulfilling all needs, suited to all times and situations, combining permanent truths with variable forms, all in perfect harmony.

God bestowed the Quran from on high on that remarkable night to warn people in the first place: *Truly, We had been ones who warn.* (44:3)

The very fact that the Quran was bestowed from on high on that blessed night makes this a deciding point: *Every wise command is made clear in it.* (44:4) The Quran certainly set things apart, distinguishing the permanent truth from powerless falsehood. Limits were established and the road along which we should travel through life was charted. This is the road we should follow for the rest of our life. Thus, none of the fundamental issues of human life are left ambiguous. Everything is made clear in the divine message. All this has been accomplished by God's command and by His will to send messengers to clarify matters for all humanity: *A command from Us. Truly, We had been ones who send it.* (44:5)

All this has been done as an act of mercy bestowed on humanity for all future generations up to the Day of Judgement: *A command*

from Us. Truly, We had been ones who send it. (44:6) Nothing manifests God's mercy like the revelation of the Quran. With consummate ease, it appeals directly to people's hearts as easily as the blood flowing through their veins. In this way, it transforms us into a noble creature. With Quranic guidance, human society becomes more like a dream world, yet it is there for eyes to see. The faith the Quran outlines profoundly engages hearts and minds so as to be loved passionately. The question here is not one of meticulous perfection, goodness and suitability. It is much more than that. It is a scenario in which every one of these qualities is further enhanced until their perfection attains a beauty that permeates all details and combines and harmonizes them while at the same time maintaining their close links to the main body.

As a mercy from your Lord. Truly, He is The Hearing, The Knowing. (44:6) He hears and He knows. He reveals what He reveals to people on the basis of His knowledge of what they say and do, as well as what is suitable and beneficial for them of laws, regulations and directives. He is the One who is in control of the universe, taking care of all who live on it. He is: *Lord of the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them. If you had been ones who are certain.* (44:7) The revelations He bestows from on high to mold people's lives is part of His Lordship of the universe and of His laws that operate in the universe.

The reference in this sign to firm belief implies an allusion to the confused beliefs of the ungrateful. They recognized God as the Creator of the heavens and the earth but they, nevertheless, associated partners with Him. This means that the central principle of Gods Oneness was blurred in their minds, and this precluded them from having firm and reassured beliefs.

God is also the One who gives life and deals death, the Lord of all generations of creation: *There is no god but He. It is He Who gives life and causes to die. He is your Lord and the Lord of your ancient fathers.* (44:8) Both the initiation of life and its deathly end are witnessed by all and are recognized as being beyond the power of any creature. This is clear at first sight and with simple consideration. The scene of death, like the scene of new life, touches the human heart and leaves a very strong influence on it, making it ready to respond. Therefore, they are often mentioned in the Quran to attract people's attention to them.

CLARIFYING SMOKE

At this point, the chapter refers to the situation of the ungrateful, which was the opposite of the seriousness with which they should

have dealt with God's revelations: (44:9-44:16)

The chapter tells the Prophet that they are playing about when the situation requires seriousness, and that they continue to be in doubt about God's confirmed revelations. He is, therefore, instructed to leave them until they face a day of great hardship: *Then, you be on the watch for a Day when the heavens will bring a clear smoke overcoming humanity. This is a painful punishment.* (44:10-44:11)

Scholars during the early period of the Quranic message differed in their views about what the smoke mentioned in this sign means. Some of them maintained that it will occur on the Day of Judgment, which makes the warning implied here similar to other warnings in the Quran about that day. They said that this will surely take place and that the Prophet awaited it. Others said that it actually did take place just as the Quran states. It was then lifted after the Prophet prayed God to so remove it.

We, though, are more in agreement with the view expressed by Ibn Abbas and explained by Ibn Kathir making it clear that the smoke will appear on the Day of Judgment. Similar warnings also occur elsewhere in the Quran. What it means here is that these people doubt and play. Leave them, then, in anticipation of that terrible day when the skies shall bring smoke that makes things clear. As it envelops people, their suffering will be particularly painful. Their appeals for help is described thus: *Our Lord! Remove you the punishment from us! Truly, we are ones who believe.* (44:12) They are told that a positive response to their appeal is impossible. It is now too late: (44:13-44:14) They claimed that a non-Arab person or people taught the Prophet the Quran, and they further alleged that Muhammad was a madman.

Having given them this image of a time when they appeal in vain, they are told that they still have a chance, which they should not lose. While they are still in this life, their punishment is delayed. If they believe now, as they will later promise they would if returned, they will have acted whilst they have the time to prove their sincerity. Nothing is lost yet, so they better act now before they are returned to God. When they are returned to Him: *On the Day when We will seize by force with the greatest attack. . .* when the smoke envelops people, *truly, We will be ones who requite* for the play you indulge in and the falsehood you level at the Prophet describing him as taught by others, a madman, when he is God's trusted messenger.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based

on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QUESTIONS

How do you understand these signs?
Would others see it this way?
Would they use these words?
How would they describe this? Why?
What exactly do they disagree about? Why?
What does X think is the cause? Y?
Why do they differ?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I understood Quranic dialogical reasoning after studying these verses.

LESSON 64(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY

DEEP QUESTIONING

When reading a sign (verse, *ayah*), critical thinkers look for the issues that underlie the claims that are expressed. They come to their own understanding of the details. They then place this in a larger context. They move between the basic underlying issues and the larger picture of the issue at hand. They remain focused on the issue as they follow a line of thought. They organize the issues in their own way as they continue to raise questions about the issue as they increase their knowledge.

QURANIC CHAPTER 44: THE SMOKE (AL-DUKHAN)

SIGNS 44:30-44:42

Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Children of Jacob (44:30)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Children of Jacob (44:31)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Children of Jacob (44:32)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Children of Jacob (44:33)
Truly, these say: (44:34)
There is nothing but our first singled out death
and we will not be ones who are revived. (44:35)
Then, bring our fathers bac
if you had been ones who are sincere. (44:36)
Are they better or a folk of Tubba
and those who were before them?
We caused them to perish.
They, truly, had been ones who sin. (44:37)
And We created not the heavens and the earth
and whatever is between them as ones who play! (44:38)
We created them not but with The Truth
but most of them know not. (44:39)
Truly, the Day of Decision is the time appointed
for them one and all, (44:40)
a Day when a defender will not avail
another defender at all
nor will they be helped (44:41)
but him on whom God had mercy.
Truly, He is The Almighty, The Compassionate. (44:42)

COMMENTARY°

Once more this section takes up the doubts and denial of resurrection and accountability of the ungrateful. Here, too, resurrection is linked to the fact that the structure of the universe is raised on a foundation of truth and seriousness that requires accountability and

requital after resurrection: Now these people assert: (44:34-44:42)

The Arab idolaters used to say that people die once only and that is the end; no resurrection and no further life. They called this the first death, meaning that it precedes what they were promised of a second life after resurrection. To them, the proof of this assertion was contained in the fact that none of their forefathers who died had ever returned; none had been resurrected. They demanded that their forefathers should be brought back to life before their eyes if resurrection were indeed true.

They thus betrayed their ignorance of the purpose of resurrection. They did not understand that it is a further stage of human life, with a definite purpose and a clear goal, which is the administration of requital for what was done in the first stage. Thus, God's obedient servants reach their noble destination, which they have earned through acting well in their first lives, while hardened sinners arrive at the miserable and filthy end they deserve. This means that resurrection will come about after the entire first stage of life has ended, i.e. the human being's time on earth has concluded. It precludes that resurrection should be the result of a human wish expressed by an individual or a community, so that they can believe in it. Indeed, faith is not complete unless one believes in resurrection, which God's messengers have confirmed, and which is apparent to anyone who reflects on the nature of life and God's wisdom in creating it in this way. Such reflection is sufficient on its own to believe in the Day of Judgment.

Before the section invites them to reflect on the design of the universe, it shakes their hearts strongly, reminding them of the fate suffered by the people of Tubba (title given to the kings of Himyar, a major tribe), in South Arabia. This story must have been well known to the Arabs, as the chapter makes only a brief reference to it, warning them against a similarly terrible fate: *Are they better or a folk of Tubba and those who were before them? We caused them to perish. They, truly, had been ones who sin.* (44:37)

As this reminder makes them shudder, they are called upon to reflect on the perfect design of the heavens and earth, and how the universe is finely balanced and well planned, indicating that it is deliberately made in this way for a particular purpose: (44:38-44:42) There is a fine and delicate relation between the creation of the heavens, the earth and all that is in between them on the one hand and the question of resurrection and accountability on the other. Human nature can easily understand this when attention is drawn to it in the way described here.

That the human being is so created, with both tendencies, and

that God's action cannot be mere idle play, means that we will have a specific fate which we meet after our journey on earth is over. This is the essence of the hereafter. Therefore, it is mentioned after attentions have been drawn to the wise purpose that lies beyond the creation of the universe: (44:40-44:42)

This statement comes naturally at this point, closely related as it is to what went before it. It is absolute wisdom that requires that creatures should have a day when judgment is made between those who follow true guidance and those who go astray; when goodness is rewarded and evil humiliated; when people have no support, bond or relation. They will return to their Creator as individuals, just like He created them, to be requited for what they did in life. No one will support them or offer a gesture of mercy, except for those on whom God bestows His grace. It is from God's hand that they came out to work in life, and to His hand they will return to receive what their actions deserve. In between, they have a chance to act, just as they are being tested.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

This Quranic Studies program has been developed to clarify and settle questions peculiar to itself. You should use such questions to organize and unify details covered in Quranic studies. The basic questions we all face include the nature of right and wrong, how we know things, and so on. In order to develop a framework for organizing details, both general and specific, Quranic ideas should be continuously raised. You need to learn to come to your own conclusions, raise thought-provoking issues, be allowed extended discussion of them and help keep the discussion focussed. Have extended discussions on thought-provoking ideas. Maintain a focus in the discussion so that multiple issues are discussed. Be clear about your objectives so that you feel that you are moving towards them in an affective way.

QUESTIONS

What do you think is the main issue in each of the Quranic examples?
Let me see if I understand you. Do you mean x or y?
How does this relate to our discussion (problem, issue)?
Could you give me an example?

Would this be an example?
Could you explain that further?
Would you say more about ht?
Why do you say that?
What do you think so-and-so meant by his remark?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to elaborate further on the deep questioning strategy in the classroom.
I was able to give an example of this in our classroom discussion.
I am beginning to be able to connect what I am learning to my life.

LESSON 64(3). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY USING INFORMATION, DATA, FACTS, OBSERVATION

HOW TO USE INFORMATION WILL BECOME CLEAR BY ANSWERING THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

Is this a fact or an ideal?
Are things always this way, or is this statement an expression of what people are trying to achieve?
Are these ideals yours?
Why or why not?
How have people attempted to achieve this ideal?
When did they not meet the ideal? Why?
What problems did they have?
Why? How can we better achieve these ideals?

How is this supposed to work in theory? Why?
What result is it supposed to have?
Why is that considered good?
How does this really work? Why?
What incorrect assumption is made in the theory?
What reasons are there for accepting this as it is?
For trying to make it closer to the ideal?
Is the way we actually do this justified? Why or why not?
If it is not justified, how can we correct it?

Have you ever thought something was true about yourself and acted in a way that was inconsistent with your ideal self?
Did you see yourself differently then?
Did you make efforts to change your behavior?
Can anyone think of ways to be more consistent?
Why is it often hard to be honest about yourself and the groups you belong to?

QURANIC CHAPTER 44: THE SMOKE (AL-DUKHAN) SIGNS 44:43-44:59

Makkah: *Truly, the tree of Zaqqum* (44:43)
will be the food of the sinful. (44:44)
Like molten copper it will bubble in the bellies, (44:45)
like boiling, scalding water. (44:46)
It will be said: Take him and drag him violently
into the depths of hellfire. (44:47)

Again, then, unloose over his head
the punishment of scalding water! (44:48)
Experience this! Truly, you, you are seemingly
the mighty, the generous. (44:49)
Truly, this is what you had been contesting. (44:50)
Truly, the ones who are God-conscious will be
in the station of trustworthiness (44:51)
among Gardens and springs (44:52)
wearing fine silk and brocade, ones who face one another. (44:53)
Thus, it is so. We will give in marriage lovely,
most beautiful eyed ones. (44:54)
They will call therein for every kind of sweet fruit,
ones that are safe. (44:55)
They will not experience death with them
but the first singled out death.
And He will protect them from the punishment of hellfire, (44:56)
a grace from your Lord. That, it is the winning
the sublime triumph! (44:57)
Truly, We made this easy in your language
so that perhaps they will recollect. (44:58)
So be on the watch!
Truly, they are ones who watch. (44:59)

COMMENTARY°

The scene begins with an image of the Zaqqum tree, which is stated to provide the food of sinners. It is a powerful image that strikes fear and panic in the audience's hearts. The closest thing we know to this food is the lees, the sediment that remains when oil has been long boiled. This lees continues to boil in their bellies like molten lead. The sinful person who behaved towards his Lord and His trusted Messenger with arrogance will be standing there. An order is issued to the guards of hell to take him away in a brutal manner that suits his honorable position: *It will be said: Take him and drag him violently into the depths of hellfire. Again, then, unloose over his head the punishment of scalding water!* (44:47-44:48) Drag him away so as to make him feel his humiliation, for there is no honor for such sinners! When he gets there, pour scalding water over his head so as to burn his skin. Then, added to all this punishment is a strong rebuke: *Truly, this is what you had been contesting.* (44:50) When you were warned against this fate, you received the warning with mockery, doubting that it would ever happen.

Our eyes stretch to the other side to see the God-conscious who

took the warning seriously and feared what may happen on this day of decision. We see them in a safe position, where there is nothing to fear and no harsh treatment. They revel in their splendor amid gardens and fountains. Their garments are made of silk and brocade. They take their positions facing one another talking about whatever is of concern to them. In addition, they are given pure companions with beautiful eyes to make their bliss perfect. There, in heaven, they are the owners of the place. They can ask for whatever they want and it will be given: *They will call therein for every kind of sweet fruit, ones that are safe.* (44:55) They expect no end to this happiness, as death does not occur here. They have already died once and they will not be made to taste death again. This contrasts with what the ungrateful used to say in this present world: *There is nothing but our first singled out death and we will not be ones who are revived.* (44:35) In the ungrateful' case, the one death is followed by suffering in hell. The believers, who are in heaven, *they will not experience death with them but the first singled out death. And He will protect them from the punishment of hellfire.* (44:56) This is yet another aspect of God's favor which He bestows on believers. No one is saved from suffering on the Day of Judgment unless the Lord grants this favor. It is all through *a grace from your Lord. That, it is the winning the sublime triumph!* (44:57)

The chapter concludes with a reminder of the great blessing God has bestowed on us by sending His message to warn us against the consequences of disbelief: (44:58-44:59)

It is a fitting conclusion that sums up the message of the chapter reflects its ambiance, and fits with its beginning and line of discussion. It started with a reference to the book God revealed as a reminder for people so that they may take heed. It warned against what may happen on the Day of Judgment, with God saying: *On the Day when We will seize by force with the greatest attack, truly, We will be ones who requite.* (44:16) The two short signs at the end remind them of the favor God granted them by giving them the Quran in the Arabic tongue, which they understand. They are finally given an implicit but nonetheless fearful warning: *So be on the watch! Truly, they are ones who watch.* (44:59)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QUESTIONS

How can we know whether or not this is true?
What would it be like for this claim to be true? False?
Do we clearly understand the difference?
What evidence would count for it? Against it?
Are any Quranic concepts (words or phrases) unclear?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

Raise basic issues.
Explore beneath the surface of things.
Follow-up problematic areas of thought.
Discover the structure of their own thought.
Develop sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
Arrive at judgment through their own reasoning.
Note claims, evidence, conclusions, questions-at-issue, assumptions, implications, consequences, concepts, interpretations, and the Quranic point of view.

LESSON 65(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY EXPERIENCES, REASONED JUDGMENTS

Any questions you ask require information. There are three aspects to this:

1. What are the questions I am being asked either explicitly or implicitly?
2. Does my thinking have a purpose?
3. How am I using the information?

If you have information, information never uses itself. Information never gives itself meaning. It deduces implications from itself. Information must be treated by the mind. It must be interpreted. Information must be given a meaning. As Quranic critical thinkers you must make certain to distinguish hard data from the inferences or conclusions that are drawn from them.

QURANIC CHAPTER 45: THE ONES WHO KNEEL (AL-JATHIYAH)
SIGNS 45:1-45:11

Makkah: *Ha Mim.* (45:1)
The sending down the Book successively is from God,
The Almighty, The Wise. (45:2)
Truly, in the heavens and the earth are signs
for the ones who believe. (45:3)
And in your creation
and what He disseminates of moving creatures
are signs for a folk who are certain, (45:4)
the alternation of the nighttime and the daytime
and what God caused to descend from the heaven of provision.
He gave life with it to the earth after its death
and the diversifying of the winds—
signs for a folk who are reasonable. (45:5)
These are the signs of God We recount to you with The Truth.
Then, in which discourse, after God
and His signs, will they believe? (45:6)
Woe to every false, sinful one! (45:7)
He hears the signs of God being recounted to him.
Again, he persists as one who grows arrogant
as if he hears them not.
So give him good tidings of a painful punishment! (45:8)
And if he knew anything about Our signs,
he took them to himself in mockery.
Those, for them is a despised punishment. (45:9)

Behind them there is hell.
What they earned will avail them not at all
nor whatever they took to themselves
other than God as protectors.
And for them will be a tremendous punishment. (45:10)
This is a guidance. Those who were ungrateful
for the signs of their Lord,
for them there is a punishment of painful wrath. (45:11)

COMMENTARY°

Ha Mim. This book is bestowed from on high by God, the Almighty, the Wise. Surely, in the heavens and the earth there are signs for those who believe. And in your own creation, and in the animals God scatters on earth there are signs for people of sure faith. And in the alternation of night and day, and in the means of subsistence God sends down from the skies, reviving with it the earth after it had been lifeless, and in the shifting of the winds there are signs for those who use their reason. (45:1-45:5)

The chapter mentions the revelation of this book, the Quran, by God, the Almighty, the Wise after having introduced the two separate Arabic letters *Ha Mim*, to point to this book's source. In speaking about the separate letters introduced at the beginning of a number of chapters, we have mentioned elsewhere that they highlight the fact that the Quran is composed of the letters forming the Arab's own language, yet they cannot produce even a very small portion like it. This, then, constitutes permanent evidence that the Quran is bestowed from on high by God, the Almighty who can do whatever He wishes, the Wise who creates everything according to a certain measure and to serve a particular purpose. This is an apt comment that fits the ambience of the chapter and its discussion of different types of people.

Before speaking about the ungrateful and their attitude towards the Quran, the chapter refers to signs pointing to the Creator that are available everywhere in the world around them. Alone, these signs should have been enough to direct them to believe in God. Now, the chapter turns their minds to such signs so that they may open their hearts to them and realize that it is God who has bestowed this book from on high and that it is He who has created this great universe: *Truly, in the heavens and the earth are signs for the ones who believe.* (45:3) The signs scattered everywhere in the heavens and the earth are not limited to any area or situation. Wherever we look around us we find signs. Is there anything in this wonderful universe that is not

a sign pointing to its great Maker?

Everything on earth and every living thing, indeed every part of every living thing, large or small, is a sign. This applies to fine, little things in the same way as it applies to the large and huge: a small leaf in a great high tree or a frail plant is a sign when we contemplate its shape, size, color and feel. A hair on the body of a person or animal and a bird's feather are equally signs whether in terms of quality, length, material or function. Wherever we stretches our eyes to look at the skies or the earth, we will find a great multitude of signs that stand clear before us. Yet, who looks at these signs and understands their message? To whom are they addressed? *Truly, in the heavens and the earth are signs for the ones who believe.* (45:3)

The section then points out that God's signs can also be seen within people themselves. They feel these close at hand: *And in your creation and what He disseminates of moving creatures are signs for a folk who are certain.* (45:4) Our wonderful constitution, unique qualities, varied and fine functions are all miraculous indeed, but we tend to forget this because of long familiarity. Indeed the physical make-up of any human organ fills us with wonder. In its most simple and primitive form, in the amoeba and even smaller forms, life is a miracle. If this is apparent in our highly complex constitution how much more complex then is our psychological and emotional constitution?

The chapter then highlights a number of natural phenomena and their effects on human life and on the lives of other creatures: *The alternation of the nighttime and the daytime and what God caused to descend from the heaven of provision. He gave life with it to the earth after its death and the diversifying of the winds—signs for a folk who are reasonable.* (45:5) The alternation of day and night is a phenomenon that has lost its significance in the minds of most people because of its regular frequency. Yet, what wonder would fill the heart of anyone who sees the approach of night or the creeping of the day for the first time? An alert mind and an open heart will always see this great wonder and marvel at it as they see in it God's hand that controls the universe.

The Quran, revealed by God, highlights these universal signs in a way that inspires believers who have certainty of faith and who use their reason. In this way, it touches hearts and minds and addresses people's natures. The profound link between human nature and the universe means that it only requires some inspiring words, such as the signs of the Quran, for senses to be alerted and made responsive. Anyone who does not believe as a result of contemplating these signs is totally unlikely to believe in some other way; and the one who is

not fully alerted by the inspiring signs of the Quran will not be alerted by loud outcries from any other source: *These are the signs of God We recount to you with The Truth.* (45:6)

No words will be as effective as the Quran, God's word. Nor will any creation be equal to God's creation in the universe. Likewise, no truth will be as clear and confirmed as the truth of God: *Then, in which discourse, after God and His signs, will they believe?* (45:6) The only requital fit to be given to an unbeliever is severe punishment:

Woe to every lying, sinful person who hears God's revelations being recited to him, and yet persists in his haughty disdain, as though he had not heard them. So, give him the news of painful suffering. When he learns something of Our revelations, he ridicules it. For such people there is humiliating suffering in store. Hell lurks behind them; and all that they may have gained shall be of no avail whatsoever to them, nor shall any of those which they took for their protectors beside God. Grievous suffering awaits them. (45:7-45:10)

These signs describe, in part, the reception by the ungrateful of the Quranic message in Makkah, their stubborn refusal to listen to the clear word of truth and their insistence on falsehood. They take a hostile attitude to the truth, as if it has never even been presented to them. These signs also mention the rudeness and impudence of the ungrateful as they speak of God and His word. The Quran severely rebukes them for this, putting before them the grievous and humiliating suffering they are certain to endure.

This sign: *Woe to every false, sinful one!* (45:7) threatens every habitual liar who frequently indulges in sin. The threat is issued by God Almighty who is able to bring about the total destruction of any community, and whose promises and warnings always come true. This makes the warning all the more serious and frightening.

The mark of such a lying, sinful person is that he persistently holds on to what is false, looks with disdain on the truth, feels too proud to respond to God's revelations and behaves with insolence towards God. *He hears the signs of God being recounted to him. Again, he persists as one who grows arrogant as if he hears them not. So give him good tidings of a painful punishment!* (45:8) Although this hateful type of person could be found among the idolaters in Makkah, the same type is seen in every society based on tribal honor, immersed in ignorance, whether in the past, present or future. Many are those all over the world, including some who are described as Muslims, who behave with disdain when they hear God's revelations being recited and who persist in their erring ways as though they have never heard such revelations. They do so because what

God has revealed is contrary to their desire and will not approve the evil and false practices in which they indulge.

This statement describes the punishment such a person will receive, but the Arabic text uses the word *bashshir* for giving news, even though the word is only used for giving good news. As used in this sign to bring news of painful suffering, it thus carries connotations of ridicule. If this person does not listen to the warning, let him receive the news of his suffering in a voice that signals good news. What mockery!

How many are those, including some described as Muslims, who ridicule God's revelations, mocking them and those who believe in them. *And if he knew anything about Our signs, he took them to himself in mockery. Those, for them is a despised punishment.* (45:9) Humiliation is the fitting requital for everyone who ridicules God's revelations.

This suffering is ready and close at hand. It may not be time for it yet, but it is nevertheless present: *Behind them there is hell. What they earned will avail them not at all nor whatever they took to themselves other than God as protectors. And for them will be a tremendous punishment.* (45:10) The phrase, *behind them*, has connotations that are specifically intended. Since the suffering is *behind* them, they do not see it and remain oblivious to it. Therefore, they do not try to avoid it. Yet it will surely engulf them. *What they earned will avail them not at all nor whatever they took to themselves other than God as protectors.* (45:10) Nothing that they might have done or gained is of any use to them. Even if some of their deeds are good, they cannot benefit from them because they have been scattered by the wind like dust. Their deeds were not founded on a solid basis of faith. Likewise, their possessions will be of no use to them. Nor can their deities, friends, supporters or soldiers offer them help or protection. Nor can they intercede on their behalf. *And for them will be a tremendous punishment.* (45:10) Their punishment is not only humiliating, as fits their offense for mocking God's revelations, it is also grievous to suit the magnitude of that offense.

This section concludes with a word that describes, in general terms, the true nature of God's revelations and the punishment to be meted out to those who disbelieve them: *This is a guidance. Those who were ungrateful for the signs of their Lord, for them there is a punishment of painful wrath.* (45:11) It is a fact that this Quran is true and pure guidance that admits no error whatsoever. Therefore, anyone who denies its truth deserves such grievous suffering. The nature of the pain is described here as abominable, which serves to emphasize its description in the previous signs.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

How would your rate yourself? Answer the following questions::

How can we know whether or not this is true?
What would it be like for this claim to be true? False?
Do we clearly understand the difference?
What evidence would count for it? Against it?
Are any Quranic concepts (words or phrases) unclear?

LESSON 65(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION: CLARIFYING VALUES AND STANDARDS

HOW IS DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING BY CLARIFYING VALUES AND STANDARDS USED IN THE QURAN?

CRITERIA INCLUDE

Clear evidence: *Surely, clear evidence drew near you from your Lord. So whoever perceived, it will be for his own soul. Whoever was in darkness will be against his own soul. Say: And I am not a guardian over you.* **(6:104)**

Meditation, pondering, considering: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* **(38:29)**

Recollection: *And his folk argued with him. He said: You argue with me about God while, surely, He guided me? I fear not whatever partners you ascribe with Him. When my Lord wills a thing, my Lord encompassed everything in His knowledge. Will you not, then, recollect?* **(6:80)**

Reflection: *And among His signs are that He created for you spouses from among yourselves, that you rest in them. And He made affection and mercy among you. Truly, in that are certainly signs for a folk who reflect.* **(30:21)**

Taking to heart: *And whomever God wants, He guides him. He expands his breast for The Submission to One God. And whomever He wants to cause to go astray, He makes his breast tight, troubling, as if he had been climbing up a difficult ascent. Thus, God assigns disgrace on those who believe not. And this is the path of your Lord, one that is straight. Surely, We explained distinctly the signs for a folk who recollect.* **(6:125-6:126)**

Convincing proof from reliable and certain premises: *Say: Prepare your proof. This is a Remembrance for him who is with me and a Remembrance of him before me. Nay! Most of them know not The Truth, so they are ones who turn aside.* **(21:24)**

Bringing your proof, showing your evidence: *Is not He better Who begins creation, again, will cause it to return and Who provides you from the heaven and the earth. Is there a god besides God? Say: Prepare your proof if you had been ones who are sincere!* **(27:64)**

People of intellect and reflection: *It is He Who caused water to descend from heaven for you to drink from it and from it, trees wherein you pasture your herds. He caused crops to develop for you with it, and the olives and the date palms and the grapevines, and all kinds of fruits. Truly, in that is a sign for a folk who reflect.* **(16:10-16:11)**

Explaining distinctly: *And it is He Who made the stars for you so that*

you will be truly guided by them in the shadows of dry land and the sea. Surely, We explained distinctly the signs for a folk who know. **(6:97-6:98)**

Being reasonable: *And He caused to be subservient to you the nighttime and the daytime and the sun and the moon, and the stars, ones caused to be subservient by His command. Truly, in that are signs for a folk who are reasonable.* **(16:12)**

Being just and fair: *O those who believed! Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God and let not that you detest a folk drive you into not dealing justly. Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness. And be God-conscious of God. Truly, God is Aware of what you do.* (5:8)

Critical thinkers understand the difference between indicating a preference for something and evaluating something. They are aware of the process and the necessary criteria in order to provide a thoughtful and fair-minded evaluation. They make use of explicit criteria.

They base their judgments on values that they have clarified and understood. When discussing the criteria of the Quranic message, critical Quranic thinkers first both understand the issue in question and the purpose of the evaluation and what function the issue being evaluated is to serve. They do this by taking into consideration various points of view in their evaluation.

The Quranic message understands the important relationship of evidence to belief and so often may qualify its statements accordingly. The tentativeness of many of its signs is characterized by the appropriate use of such qualifiers as: highly likely, probably, not very likely, highly unlikely, often, usually, seldom, I doubt, I suspect, most, many, and some. Critical thinkers are not only clear, but also exact or precise.

What information does the Quran give in this sign?
What information do I need to answer my question?

Then, believe you in some of the Book, and are ungrateful for some? (2:85)

QURANIC CHAPTER 45: THE ONES WHO KNEEL (AL-JATHIYAH)

SIGNS 45:12-45:21

Makkah: *God! It is He Who caused the sea to be subservient to you that the boats may run through it by His command and so that you be looking for His grace and so that perhaps you will give thanks.* (45:12)
And He caused to be subservient to you whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in and on the earth. All is from Him.

Truly, in that are signs for a folk who reflect. (45:13)

Madinah (45:14)

Makkah: *Whoever did as one in accord with morality,*
it is for himself and whoever did evil, it is against himself.
Again, to your Lord you will be returned. (45:15)

Makkah: Book 27: Children of Jacob (45:16)

Makkah: Book 27: Children of Jacob (45:17)

Makkah: *Again, We assigned **you** an open way of the command*
so follow it and follow not the desires
of those who know not. (45:18)
*Truly, they will never avail **you** against God at all.*
And, truly, the ones who are unjust, some of them
are protectors of some others.
But God is Protector of the ones who are God-conscious. (45:19)
This is a clear evidence for humanity and a guidance
and a mercy for a folk who are certain. (45:20)
Assumed those who sought to do evil deeds
that We will make them equal
with those who believed and did
as the ones in accord with morality?
Are their living and dying equal?
How evil is the judgment they give! (45:21)

COMMENTARY°

It is God who has subjected the sea for you, so that ships sail through it by His command, and that you may seek of His bounty, and that you give thanks. And He has subjected to you, as a gift from Himself all that is in the heavens and on earth. In this there are signs for people who think. (45:12-45:13)

Having specified the sea, the section makes a general reference to God's favors. He has made all the forces, potentials and blessings in the universe that have a bearing on the human being's task on earth subservient to him: (45:13) Everything in the universe is created by God. He controls it and determines its operation. The human being, a small creature in the universe, is given the ability to understand a part of the laws of nature that operate, by God's will, in this universe. This enables him to make use of powers and forces that are immeasurably greater than his own. Without God's grace, he would not have been able to do so. In all this, there are signs to reflect upon: (45:13)

Now the chapter calls on believers to show magnanimity and forbearance to those who are weak because their hearts do not open to the great source of power. They are urged to show kindness to

those who are blind to the great truths, and as a result, do not look forward to God's great days when some aspects of His majesty are clearly shown:

This directive: (45:15) is issued to the believers, requiring them to be forbearing towards those who do not look forward to God's days. Theirs should be an attitude of forgiveness that combines generosity with power and dignity. The truth is that such people deserve pity and sympathy because they are deprived of the benefit of believing in God, which is a rich treasure of grace, strength, wealth, reassurance and kindness. It provides true protection in moments of stress and weakness. They are also deprived of true knowledge that understands the nature of universal laws and what they can bring of power and riches for human benefit. Those who enjoy the wealth of grace and benefits that come with faith are the ones who should be forbearing. They should forgive the slips and errors of the ones who are deprived of them.

On the other hand, the believers should leave the matter to God and He will requite all as they deserve. He will then credit them with their forbearing attitude and reward them for it as a deed of goodness. Such forgiveness naturally applies to what does not spread corruption on earth and does not constitute a transgression of the bounds set by God: (45:14) This is followed by an assertion about every person's individual responsibility and about fair judgment for all. It further confirms that all will return to God: (45:15) When this is made clear, a believer is able to be forbearing and to overlook personal offenses, but this forbearance is not out of weakness. Instead, he is the one who is strong and magnanimous. He holds the torch of guidance to enable the ones deprived of light to see. He comes forward with the cure for those who are ill. He will be rewarded according to his deeds, unharmed by those who do evil. All matters are ultimately judged by God, to whom all shall return.

God assigned a new leadership, imparted a new message to a different messenger, put His divine law back on its right course and gave back to divine faith its absolute clarity. This new leadership is thus guided by God's law, not by any human desire: *Again, We assigned you an open way of the command so follow it and follow not the desires of those who know not.* (45:18) Thus matters are defined in absolute clarity: it is either God's law or people's changing desires that are devoid of knowledge. There can be no third alternative and no middle way. No one abandons divine law unless they choose to pursue human desires. Everything that differs with God's law is the expression of desire that pleases those who lack knowledge. God warns His Messenger against following the desires of those who have

no knowledge of the truth, as they will be of no avail to him. They only try to protect one another. Thus, they cannot harm him in any way as God will support and protect him: *Truly, they will never avail you against God at all. And, truly, the ones who are unjust, some of them are protectors of some others. But God is Protector of the ones who are God-conscious.* (45:19)

This sign and the one before it charts the way for the advocates of the divine message, leaving no need for any comment or further detail: (45:18-45:19) There is only one law that fits this description; everything else is the result of desire and ignorance. Every advocate of the divine faith must follow only that. Those who espouse desire cannot help a believer: they only help one another and will not abandon their course. Yet they are too weak to be able to cause a believer any harm, since God is the One who protects the God-conscious.

Commenting on this decisive clarification, the chapter mentions the certainty of faith and what the Quran provides of insight, guidance and divine grace: *This is a clear evidence for humanity and a guidance and a mercy for a folk who are certain.* (45:20) Describing the Quran as a means of insight emphasizes its role of providing enlightenment. The Quran provides insight, and insight makes matters clear. Moreover, the Quran itself is guidance and mercy, but all this is dependent on certainty of faith which admits no doubt or worry. With such certainty, we know the way as it appears before us clear, straight, leading to a well defined goal. We go along this way sure o step and without hesitation. The Quran is our source of light anc guidance. It is indeed the embodiment of God's grace.

The section clearly distinguishes between those who commit evil and those who do good as a result of being believers. There is no way that they can be judged in the same way. They are different in God's sight. Furthermore, God has established His universal law on the basis of truth and justice.

Assumed those who sought to do evil deeds that We will make them equal with those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality? Are their living and dying equal? How evil is the judgment they give! (45:21) may be understood to refer to those among the people of earlier revelations who deviated from their scriptures and indulged in sin, but who nonetheless continued to think of themselves as believers. They might have thought themselves to be on the same level as Muslims who do good deeds. They might also have considered that the two groups are equal in God's sight, both in this life and in the life after death when people are given their reward or punishment. These signs may also be taken as a general discourse defining how people are judged on Gods scales. It shows that believ-

ers who do good deeds are definitely in a higher position. It says that putting the evildoers and the God-conscious on the same level, either in this life or in the next, conflicts with the basic and permanent rule upon which the universe is founded, namely, the truth. Thus the truth is fundamental to both the universe and the divine law.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QUESTIONS

What does the Quranic message want to communicate? Why?
What else do I want to say about it and why?
What else do I know or think about this?
How is what I am saying like and unlike what others have said?

What are we evaluating? Why?
Given these reasons or differences, can we generalize and list criteria?
Can we describe what to look for when judging an unjust person?
What features does an unjust person need to have? Why?

ANALYZING OR EVALUATING

What are the arguments given in the above signs?
What would someone who disagreed with these arguments say?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

Evaluating Reasoning by:•
Using specific analytic techniques, such as making assumptions explicit and evaluating them
Clarifying issues, conclusions, values, and words
Developing criteria for evaluation
Recognizing and pinpointing contradictions
Distinguishing relevant from irrelevant facts

LESSON 65(3). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ACTIONS

You should evaluate your actions in regard to Prophets of the past.

QURANIC CHAPTER 45: THE ONES WHO KNEEL (AL-JATHIYAH)
SIGNS 45:22-45:26

Makkah: *And God created the heavens*
and the earth with The Truth
so that every soul would be given recompense for what it earned
and they, they will not be wronged. (45:22)
Had you considered he who took to himself
his own desire as his god and whom God
caused to go astray out of a knowledge,
sealed over his having the ability to hear
and his heart and laid a blindfold on his sight?
Who, then, will guide him after God?
Will you not, then, recollect? (45:23)
And they said: There is nothing, but this present life of ours.
We die and we live and nothing causes us to perish
but a long course of tim
And there is for them not any knowled
Truly, they are but surmising. (45:2
And when are recounted to them Our signs, clear portent
then, disputation had not been but that they said:
Bring our fathers if you had been ones who are sincere. (45:25)
Say: God gives you life. Again, He causes you to die.
Again, He will gather you on the Day of Resurrection
in which there is no doubt
but most of humanity knows not. (45:26)

COMMENTARY°

Consequently, both the universe and human life are set to progress by means of this truth. This manifests itself in the distinction between evildoers and those who do good in all respects, and in the individual judging of people on the basis of what each has earned through life. Justice is, thus, administered to all: (45:22) This is the constant truth, the foundational stone of the entire universe.

The chapter then refers to desire, which is by nature changing and fleeting. Yet some people make of desire a deity and thus they are unable to recognize true guidance: (45:23)

The inimitable Quranic style draws here an extraordinary image of the human soul when it abandons the basic and permanent rule of truth in order to follow fleeting desires, making of them a deity from which concepts, rules, feelings and actions are derived. In this way do we submit to desire and obey its dictates. This extraordinary situation is painted in a tone that invites strong censure.

The Arabic phrase, *ilm*, may be translated as, in full knowledge, in which case it refers to God's knowledge that such a person deserves to be left astray. Alternatively, it can be translated as despite his knowledge. In other words, his knowledge of the truth does not deter him from pursuing his desires. Such a person deserves to be left straying in blindness: *God caused to go astray out of a knowledge, sealed over his having the ability to hear and his heart and laid a blindfold on his sight* allowing no light or guidance to seep through. His judgment is, thus, fundamentally impaired.

All guidance comes from God. No one can provide anyone with guidance or error, not even His chosen messengers. It is all determined by God alone. *Had you considered he who took to himself his own desire as his god and whom God caused to go astray out of a knowledge, sealed over his having the ability to hear and his heart and laid a blindfold on his sight? Who, then, will guide him after God? Will you not, then, recollect?* (45:23) When a person takes heed, he will break the chains of desire and return to the straight path of truth. No one who treads this path will ever go astray.

So short-sighted were they that they considered life to be nothing beyond what they saw before their very eyes: one generation dies and another replaces it in life. (45:24-45:26) Apparently, no hand deals death; it is all a question of days that pass and time that elapses bringing death to all. It is time, then, that ends their lives, making them die. This is a superficial outlook that does not go beyond appearances to discover subtle reasons and causes. They do not ask what brings them life; or, when it is there, what takes it away? They see that death does not occur according to a defined system or after a certain number of days and years. Instead, they think that only the passage of time deprives them of life. Death comes to all: children and the elderly, the healthy and the ill, the strong and the weak. Therefore, when we carefully consider the reason behind all this, time is an inadequate explanation.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary**

(concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions,** (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QUESTIONS

What information are the ones who only believe in what was caused to descend to them using?
Where did they get that information?
What information is given about them?

What does this remind you of? Why?
How are the interpretations similar? Different?
How important are the differences? Why?
What does this tell us about our topic?
How useful is that comparison?
Can anyone think of an even more useful comparison?

What is the meaning behind the information given in the above sign?
What the assumption of those who say that all disbelievers should be killed?
What is the Quranic response to their assumption?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I tried to find the key concept of one of the Quranic signs.
II was able to analyze my actions today and evaluate them.

LESSON 65(4). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY DISTINGUISHING RELEVANT FROM IRRELEVANT INFORMATION

DEVELOPING SENSITIVITY TO RELEVANCE

You can then discover that sometimes you must argue for the relevance of a particular fact to an issue. Another technique for developing your sensitivity to relevance is to change an issue slightly and compare what was relevant to the first issue to what is relevant to the second. You could read the section and signs with one or more issues in mind and note relevant details. You could then share and discuss your lists. You can then discover that sometimes you must argue for the relevance of a particular fact to an issue. You may assume that they have to use all information they are given to ask a question. You need to learn how to limit your responses with only the relevant facts. Implications are deduced from information after the information is interpreted and given a meaning.

Learn to distinguish relevant from irrelevant facts. This is not always clear and, therefore, should be part of a classroom discussion. You should also be aware that a fact that is relevant for one situation may not be relevant to a different one.

When discussing an issue, solution to a problem, or when giving reasons for a conclusion, you can practice limiting your remarks to facts which are relevant to that or conclusion. Don't assume that all information given has to be used to solve a problem. Life does not sort relevant from irrelevant information for us. Make a case for the pertinence of your remarks, and see when your remarks are irrelevant.

QURANIC CHAPTER 45: THE ONES WHO KNEEL (AL-JATHIYAH)

SIGNS 45:27-45:37

Makkah: *And to God belongs the dominion*
of the heavens and the earth.
And on a Day that the Hour will be secure,
on that Day the ones who deal in falsehood will lose. (45:27)
Thou wilt see each community one who crawls on its knees.
Each community will be called to its book:
This Day you will be given recompense
for what you had been doing. (45:28)
This is Our Book that speaks for itself against you with The Truth.
Truly, We registered what you had been doing. (45:29)
Then, as for those who believed
and did as the ones in accord with morality,
their Lord will cause them to enter in His mercy.

That will be the winning the clear triumph. (45:30)
But as for those who were ungrateful:
Be not My signs recounted to you?
Then, you grew arrogant and you had been a folk,
ones who sin! (45:31)
And when it was said: Truly, the promise of God is true
and the Hour, there is no doubt about it.
You said: We are not informed about the Hour.
Truly, We think it but an opinion
and we are not ones who ascertain it. (45:32)
And shown to themselves will be the evil deeds they did.
They will be surrounded by what they had been ridiculing. (45:33)
It would be said: This Day We will forget you
as you forgot the meeting of this your Day.
Your place of shelter will be the fire
and there is not for you anyone who helps. (45:34)
This is because you took to yourselves
the signs of God in mockery
and this present life deluded you.
So this Day they will not be brought out
from there nor will they ask to be favored. (45:35)
So The Praise belongs to God, the Lord of the heavens
and the Lord of the earth,
and the Lord of the worlds. (45:36)
And His is the domination of the heavens and the earth
And He is The Almighty, The Wise. (45:37

COMMENTARY°

They are now presented with a scene from the day that they doubt will ever come: When the Last Hour strikes, those who follow falsehood will on that Day lose all. You will see every community on its knees. Every community will be summoned to its record: (45:27-45:29)

All those waiting on their knees look anxiously, breathless and with dry mouths. They are told: (45:28-45:29) All of them, belonging to different communities, races and generations, are split into two groups—believers and unbelievers—for there is no other banner to raise on that occasion. One is God's party and the other is Satan's.

They are the ones who are given comfort to dispel all worry and anxiety: (45:30) The outcome of their situation is given straightaway, easily and without delay, so as to spread over them a pleasant air. But what do we find as we stretch our eyes through the words of the

text to look at the other party? We hear a long and shameful rebuke one that reminds them of their worst sayings and deeds: (45:31-45:32)

How do you view your situation now? Are you convinced? Then the chapter turns away for a moment to give us a glimpse of what happens to them: (45:33) Further reproach is heaped upon their heads, and they are told that their lot will be nothing other than total disregard, humiliation as well as painful doom: (45:34-45:35)

As their ultimate fate is announced, the curtains are drawn leaving them in hell from which they cannot hope to leave and where they are not asked for excuses or justification: (45:35) As we listen, we almost hear the doors of hell as they are finally closed. The scene is completed; nothing of it will change.

The chapter concludes with voices praising and glorifying God: (45:36-45:37)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QUESTIONS

How would you answer the Quranic question?
What are the implications of the fact that no burdened soul will bear an other's heavy load?
What issues are the sign addressing?
Are you addressing this same issue or raising a new one?

Read a chapter of the Quran with one or more issues in mind and note relevant details. Share and discuss your lists.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I understand what a rhetorical question is.
I realize the importance of the Quran saying that no one will bear the results of another person's actions.
It is an important Quranic concept that each person is responsible for their own beliefs and actions.

LESSON 66(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
MAKING INTERPRETATIONS, INFERENCES, CONCLUSIONS

Quranic critical thinkers have learned on which evidence to base their conclusion. They can insightfully discuss evidence relevant to the issue or conclusions they consider. They scrutinize and evaluate factual claims.

QURANIC CHAPTER 46: THE CURVING SANDHILLS (AL-AHQAF)
SIGNS 46:1-46:10

Makkah: *Ha Mim.* (46:1)
The sending down successively of the Book
is from God The Almighty, The Wise.(46:2)
We created not the heavens and the earth
and whatever is between the two,
but with The Truth and for a term, that which is determined.
And those who disbelieved in what they were warned
about are ones who turn aside.(46:3)
Say: Considered you what you call to other than God?
Cause me to see what of the earth they created.
Have they an association in the heavens?
Bring me a Book from before this,
or a vestige of knowledge
if you had been ones who are sincere.(46:4
And who is one who has gone more astr
than one who calls to other than Gc
one who responds not to him until the Day of Resurrection
And they are of their supplication to them,
ones who are heedless.(46:5)
And when humanity will be assembled,
they will become their enemies
and will be ones who disavow their worship.(46:6)
And when Our signs are recounted, clear portents,
those who were ungrateful for The Truth said
when it drew near them:
This is clear sorcery!(46:7)
Or they say: He devised it.
Say: If I devised it, you still possess nothing for me against God.
He is greater in knowledge of what you press on about.
He sufficed as a Witness between me and between you.
And He is The Forgiving, The Compassionate.(46:8)
Say: I had not been an innovation among the Messengers,
nor am I informed of what will be wreaked on me,

nor with you. I follow only what is revealed to me and I am only a clear warner.(46:9)

(46:10) Madinah

COMMENTARY°

The present section, revealed in Makkah except for the last sign, addresses the question of faith: belief in God's Oneness and His absolute Lordship of the universe. As in other Makkan chapters, faith here also includes belief in the revelation of the divine message to Muhammad, God's Messenger, who was preceded by other messengers, and to whom the Quran was bestowed from on high, confirming earlier scriptures. It also includes belief in the resurrection and accountability for all that is done in this present life, whether good or evil.

These are the fundamental principles upon which the Quranic message builds its whole structure. Therefore, the Quran elaborates on these principles in all the Makkan chapters. It also touches upon these aspects in the chapters revealed later in Madinah, and specifically whenever it lays down legislation or addresses a directive to the Muslim community. Part of the nature of the Quranic faith is that it considers belief in God's Oneness, Muhammad's message and accountability in the life to come the pivot upon which all its principles, systems, laws and morality turn. All are closely related to this belief. Therefore, they remain proactive.

The chapter treats this question of faith in every possible way, presenting it against different backdrops and adding universal, psychological and historical effects. It makes faith a question for all existence, not merely the human race. It gives us a glimpse of how some of the jinn listened to the Quran, and refers to the attitude of some of the Children of Jacob to it, presenting one testimony from uncorrupted human nature and another from some Israelites. It takes us on a journey so that we can look at the expanse of the heavens and the earth, and it also presents images from the Day of Judgment. It further shows us the fate of the people of Hud, and touches on the fates of some of the townships around Makkah. According to the chapter, both the universe itself and the Quran are books stating the same truth.

The chapter consists of four inter-related parts that can be seen as a single whole. The first part begins with the two separate letters *Ha Mim*, that also began the six chapters preceding this one. These two letters are immediately followed by a reference to the book of the Quran and its being a revelation from God: *The sending down*

successively of the Book is from God The Almighty, The Wise. (46:2) The chapter follows this with a reference to the book of the universe, which is established on the basis of His truth and created according to elaborate planning. *We created not the heavens and the earth and whatever is between the two, but with The Truth and for a term, that which is determined. And those who disbelieved in what they were warned about are ones who turn aside.* (46:3) Thus, the recited book of the Quran and the book of the universe we behold confirm the truth as well as the elaborate planning. (46:3)

After this powerful and comprehensive opening, the chapter begins to present the question of faith, starting with a denunciation of polytheism, upheld by the pagan Arabs, demonstrating that it lacks all basis in the universe, and that it further lacks true pronouncement and inherited knowledge: *Say: Considered you what you call to other than God? Cause me to see what of the earth they created. Have they an association in the heavens? Bring me a Book from before this, or a vestige of knowledge if you had been ones who are sincere.* (46:4) It shows the error of the one who worships instead of God someone or thing who cannot hear or respond to its worshipper and who disputes with him on the Day of Judgment dissociating itself from all such worship.

It then speaks of the appalling reception they gave to the truth as presented by Muhammad, describing it as plain sorcery. *And when Our signs are recounted, clear portents, those who were ungrateful for The Truth said when it drew near them: This is clear sorcery!* (46:7) They even had the temerity to go further than this and alleged that the Prophet had fabricated it all. The chapter instructs the Prophet to give them a reply that suits his position as a Messenger of God, one that reflects his fear of God and accepts His judgment both in this world and the next: (46:8-46:9)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QUESTIONS

Does this description stick to the facts?

Or, is reasoning or response included?

Is this something that can be directly seen?

Or would you have to interpret what you saw to arrive at this statement?
Is this how anyone would describe the situation?
Or would someone else see it differently?
What alternative descriptions or explanations are there?

Students could then examine the assumptions and inferences underlying the alternatives.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I am able to give reasons for my statements.
I am also able to develop alternative explanations.

LESSON 66(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ARGUMENTS AND INTERPRETATIONS

HOW TO APPROACH THE QURAN

Quranic critical readers approach the sacred text with a view to entering a silent dialogue with God. They realize they must actively reconstruct God's meaning. They read because there is much that they know they do not know, much to experience that they have not experienced. Thus, critical readers do not simply pass their eyes over the words with the intention of filling their memories. They question, organize, interpret, synthesize, and digest what they read. They question, not only what was said, but also what was implied and presupposed. They organize the details, not only around key ideas in the work, but also around their own key ideas. They not only conclude, they recognize their conclusions as conclusions, and consider alternative conclusions.•

Recognizing your conclusions as such, you revise and refine them. You do not simply accept or reject; you work to make ideas your own, accepting what makes most sense, rejecting what does not fit your new understanding into their existing frameworks of thought.

WHAT IS AN IMPLICATION, CONCLUSION?

In Quranic Studies you learn to come to conclusions based on conditional reasoning (if ... then ...) given in the particular Quranic signs you are studying where a major general premise combines with a more specific minor premise. As you study the Quranic signs, you should look for information and then separate the information from the conclusion.

To reach a conclusion, respond with your own conception of what you are studying. Place it in the context of your own experience, perspective, point of view, or philosophy. For example, you may conclude from the silence of another person towards you as an expression of hostility. This conclusion may or may not be correct. It may be based on your own patterns of motivation and behavior that you projected onto the other person.

Conclusions should be distinguished from the facts, the evidence, the situation. The best conclusions take the most evidence into account. Critical thinkers recognize the conclusions of the Quranic signs they are studying, distinguish them from evidence, consider alternative interpretations, and reconsider their interpretations in the light of new evidence.

ALL LEARNING INVOLVES:

All learning involves personal interpretation, since whatever you learn you must integrate into your own thinking and action. What you learn must be given a meaning by you, must be meaningful to you, and therefore in-

volves interpretive acts on your part.

QURANIC CHAPTER 46: THE CURVING SANDHILLS (AL-AHQAF)
SIGNS 46:11-46:20

Makkah: *Those who were ungrateful said*
of those who believed:
If it had been good, they would not have preceded us towards it.
And when they are not truly guided by it, they say:
This is a ripe, aged calumny. (46:11)
Yet before it was the Book of Moses for a leader and as a mercy.
And this is a Book, that which establishes
as true in the Arabic language
to warn those who did wrong and as good tidings
to the ones who are doers of good. (46:12)
Truly, those who say: Our Lord is God again, go straight,
neither will there be fear in them,
nor will they feel remorse. (46:13)
Those are the Companions of the Garden,
ones who will dwell in it forever
as a recompense for what they had been doing. (46:14)
Madinah (46:15)
Those are those from whom We will receive
the fairer of what they did and we will pass on by their evil deeds.
They are among the Companions of the Garden.
This is the promise of sincerity
that they had been promised. (46:16)
But he who would say to ones who are his parents
a word of disrespect to both of them:
Promise you me that I will be brought out when
generations before me passed away?
And they will both cry to God for help: Woe unto you!
Believe! Truly, the promise of God is true.
But he said: This is only the fables of the ancient ones. (46:17)
Those are those against whom the saying was realized
about the communities
that passed away before of the jinn and humankind.
Truly, they had been ones who are losers. (46:18)
And for each there will be degrees according to what he did
and He will pay them their account in full for their actions
and they, they will not be wronged. (46:19)
On a Day when they will be presented

—those who were ungrateful—to the fire, it will be said:
You caused what is good to be put away in your present life
while you enjoyed it.
Then, you will be given recompense
with a punishment of humiliation because you
had been growing arrogant on the earth without right
and because you had been disobeying. (46:20)

COMMENTARY°

The section also mentions the flimsy justification of the attitude of the ungrateful as they said in reference to the believers: *Those who were ungrateful said of those who believed: If it had been good, they would not have preceded us towards it. And when they are not truly guided by it, they say:* (46:11) This explains their true stance: *This is a ripe, aged calumny.* (46:11) The chapter also refers to the book of Moses and the fact that the Quran confirms it, highlighting its role: (46:12) This part concludes with details of the good news given to those who believe in God and follow the right course: (46:13-46:14)

The second part of the chapter portrays two patterns of human nature, one upright and the other deviant, highlighting their different attitudes to the question of faith. It depicts both natures as they commence their lives, reared by their parents. It describes their respective attitudes when they come of age and are able to make their own choices. The first recognizes God's blessings, is dutiful towards his parents, eager to give thanks, and seeking forgiveness for slips and mistakes: (46:16) The other is disobedient of both his parents and God, denies the Day of Resurrection, and creates tremendous distress for his parents: (46:18)

This part of the chapter concludes with a swift scene of the Day of Judgment portraying the fate of this second type of person: . (46:20)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QUESTIONS

What does the Quranic message want to communicate? Why?

What is it talking about? What do I want to say about it?
What else do I want to say about it and why?
What else do I know or think about this?
How is what I am saying like and unlike what others have said?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to use specific analytic techniques, such as making assumptions explicit and evaluating them.
I was able to clarify issues, conclusions, values, and words.
I was able to develop criteria for evaluation.

QURANIC CHAPTER 46: THE CURVING SANDHILLS (AL-AHQAF)

SIGNS 46:21-46:26

Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (46:21)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (46:22)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (46:23)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (46:24)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (46:25)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (46:26)

LESSON 66(3). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY UTILIZING CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS, PRINCIPLES, VOCABULARY

WHAT IS AN ARGUMENT?

Arguments differ from explanations. An explanation is also a series of statements, but the difference is that with an explanation, knowing the first statement is true. The statements that follow explain why the first statement is true. On the other hand, in the case of arguments, based on the series of statements or premises, you infer the conclusion.

Critical thinkers try to overlook their preconceptions when agreeing or disagreeing with a conclusion. They use tools of analysis to try to understand the reason behind the issue and to determine its relative strengths and weaknesses. One of the tools of analysis is to continue to ask for reasons and to consider other points of views. They pay special attention to possible strong arguments with which they disagree because they are aware of the tendency to ignore, oversimplify, distort or otherwise unfairly dismiss them. They analyze questions and place conflicting arguments and interpretations in opposition to one another as a means of highlighting key concepts, assumptions, implications, and so forth. When giving or being given an interpretation, students learn to recognize the difference between evidence and interpretation, explore the assumptions on which interpretations are based and propose and evaluate alternative interpretations for their relative strength. As autonomous thinkers, they consider competing theories and develop their own theories.

QURANIC CHAPTER 46: THE CURVING SANDHILLS (AL-AHQAF)
SIGNS 46:27-46:35

Makkah: *And, certainly,*
We caused to perish towns around you
and We diversified the signs
so that perhaps they will return. (46:27)
Then, why helped them not those whom they took to themselves
other than God
as gods as a mediator. Nay!
They went astray from them.
And that was their calumny
and what they had been devising. (46:28)
And when We turned away from you groups of men or jinn
who listen to the Quran,
when they found themselves in its presence,

they said: Pay heed.
And when it was finished, they turned to their folk,
ones who warn. (46:29)
They said: O our folk! Truly, We heard a Book
was caused to descend after Moses,
that which establishes as true what was in advance of it.
It guides to The Truth and to a straight road. (46:30)
O our folk! Answer one who calls to God and believe in Him.
He will forgive you your impieties
and will grant protection to you
from a painful punishment. (46:31)
And who answers not to one who calls to God?
He is not one who frustrates Him in and on the earth.
And there will not be for him other than God any protectors.
Those are clearly gone astray. (46:32)
Considered they not that God
Who created the heavens and the earth
and is not wearied by their creation—
is One Who Has Power to give life to the dead?
Yea! He, truly, is Powerful over everything. (46:33)
And on a Day when will be presented those who were ungrateful
to the fire saying: Is not this The Truth?
They would say: Yea! By our Lord!
He will say: Then, experience the punishment
because you had been ungrateful! (46:34)
(46:35) Madinah

COMMENTARY°

The Makkan ungrateful are also reminded of the fate their own ancestors met, given they too had adopted the same attitude. They are told in no uncertain terms that they will suffer the same fate. The chapter also shows them the line the divine message follows: it is consistent and unchanging. Likewise, God's law applies to all and does not change. We see the tree of faith with firm roots, its branches stretched wide across the generations. It is the same faith for all times and communities.

This last part of the chapter presents a different way of tackling the basic question of faith. It tells us the story of a group of jinn who heard the Quran being recited and who listened to it. They felt, at heart, that it was the word of truth and believed in it instantly. They then rushed to their own people calling on them to believe, giving them the good news of earning forgiveness for their past sins and

warning them against turning away and persisting in error. The effect of the Quran on this group of jinn is clearly indicated in their advice to each other to hearken to its recitation, as well as the report they gave to their people about it, urging them to believe too. Reporting the story in this way should touch the hearts of human beings to whom the message of the Quran is firstly addressed. It should have a telling and profound effect on them. At the same time, a reference to the link between the book given to Moses and the Quran is mentioned by the jinn. This is a fact ignored by humans but highlighted by the jinn. Again this has a profound effect which is consistent with the message of the chapter.

The jinn discourse also refers to the open book of the universe, testifying to God's great power manifested in the creation of the heavens and the earth and His ability to bring the dead back to life. Needless to say, people argue endlessly about this, often denying it altogether.

In the context of resurrection, the section portrays a scene from the Day of Judgment speaking of the time when the ungrateful are brought before the fire of hell. Finally, the Prophet is instructed to remain patient in adversity and not to hasten their punishment. Rather, he should leave them to live their lives until the appointed time, which is bound to come soon, in no more than an hour of a day during which the message is given.

We sent to you a group of jinn to listen to the Quran. When they heard it, they said to one another: Listen in silence! When the recitation ended, they returned to their people to warn them. Our people, they said, we have been listening to revelation bestowed from on high after Moses, confirming what came before it. It guides to the truth and to a straight path. Our people! Respond to God's call and have faith in Him. He will forgive you your sins and deliver you from grievous suffering. He who does not respond to God's call cannot elude Him on earth, nor will they have any protector against Him. They are indeed in manifest error. Are they not aware that

God, who has created the heavens and the earth and was not wearied by their creation, has the power to bring the dead back to life? Yes, indeed. He has power over all things. (46:29-46:33)

Those jinn who listened to the Quran in silence made a comment that embraced faith in its entirety: belief in God's revelation; the unity of the message given in the Torah and the Quran; acknowledging the truth to which the Quran guides; belief in the Day of Resurrection and which actions earn forgiveness and which incur punishment; acknowledging God's power of creation and His overall authority over all creatures, and recognizing the link between creation in the first

place and bringing the dead back to life. These are the principles the chapter discusses from start to finish. They are presented here by the jinn, in a voice that comes from beyond the human world.

The fact that the Quran mentions how a number of jinn were sent to listen to the Quran as the Prophet recited it, and reports what they did and said afterwards, is sufficient to confirm the existence of the jinn and the event related. It further confirms that they were able to listen to the Quran in its Arabic wording as pronounced by the Prophet. It also makes clear that the jinn are able to accept faith or deny it, that they have the choice to follow guidance or continue in error. There is no need for any further confirmation. No person can add anything to the reliability of a fact stated by God in the Quran. We, however, merely try to clarify it in our human perception.

His gift with gratitude and take it as He gives it to us, adding nothing and omitting nothing. Such knowledge comes to us directly from God, and He has chosen to give it to us in a particular measure. There is simply no other source to give us more.

And when We turned away from you groups of men or jinn who listen to the Quran, when they found themselves in its presence, they said: Pay heed. And when it was finished, they turned to their folk, ones who warn.(46:29)

It was, then, a purposeful act of God's that He sent this group of inn to listen to the Quran; in other words, it was not mere coincidence. God wanted the jinn to know about His final message, just as they had earlier learnt about Moses' message. According to His design, some of them will then believe and spare themselves punishment in hell, which is the abode of ungrateful jinn or humans.

The chapter draws before our eyes an image of this group, between three and ten jinn, as they listened to the Quran. It paints for us their feelings as it was being recited: an overwhelming awe leading to submission and action. *And when We turned away from you groups of men or jinn who listen to the Quran, when they found themselves in its presence, they said: Pay heed.*

This short sign gives a clear impression of their attitude as they hearkened to the Quranic recitation. Then, *when it was finished, they turned to their folk, ones who warn.* (46:29) This sentence confirms the effect the Quran had on them. They listened in complete silence, attentions focused throughout the recitation. When it was over, they returned at speed to their own people. They felt that what they had heard must be immediately told and passed on. Their people needed to know so that they could be warned. It is a situation where one is highly influenced by something which motivates him to immediate action that seeks to spread the benefit and to get others to adopt the

same serious attitude: *They said: O our folk! Truly, We heard a Book was caused to descend after Moses, that which establishes as true what was in advance of it.* (46:30)

They give expression to their feelings as they listened to the Quran: *It guides to The Truth and to a straight road.* (46:30) The truth and the guidance provided by the Quran have a profound effect on people. Only a sealed heart and an arrogant, stubborn soul, motivated by selfish interests, will resist it. Therefore, it had an immediate and telling effect on the hearts of those jinn, prompting them to give this testimony of its truth. They proceeded with their warning to their people, full of enthusiasm and expressing their firm conviction of the truth they had learnt. In other words, this recitation of the Quran placed a duty on them to inform and warn others: *O our folk! Answer one who calls to God and believe in Him. He will forgive you your impieties and will grant protection to you from a painful punishment.* (46:31) They considered the revelation of the Quran a call on everyone who learned of it, whether human or jinn, to believe. They also considered Muhammad to be the one who called them to believe in God merely by reciting the Quran. Therefore, their appeal to their people: *O our folk! Answer one who calls to God and believe in Him.* (46:31) They also believed in the Day of Judgment and learnt that belief and positive response to the divine call ensured forgiveness of sins and deliverance from punishment. So they imparted this news to their people.

Ibn Ishaq considers that this concludes what the jinn said to their people, but the context suggests that the next two signs were also stated by them. We think that this is more likely, particularly the next sign:*And who answers not to one who calls to God? He is not one who frustrates Him in and on the earth. And there will not be for him other than God any protectors. Those are clearly gone astray.* (46:32) This is a logical complement to the warning given by the jinn to their people whom they advised to believe in the new message. It is also likely that they explained that a negative response leads to dire consequences. No one who rejects the divine call can escape God: He is always able to inflict punishment. The unbeliever will find none to support him against God or protect him from His punishment. He is, therefore, indeed in manifest error.

Likewise, the next sign most probably reports more of what the jinn said, as they wondered at those who reject God's call, thinking that they are immune from punishment or that there will be neither reckoning nor requital: *Considered they not that God Who created the heavens and the earth and is not wearied by their creation—is One Who Has Power to give life to the dead? Yea! He, truly, is Pow-*

erful over everything. (46:33)

This is a reference to the book of the universe mentioned at the chapter's outset. The Quran often provides such a close connection between a direct statement and a similar one occurring within a story or historical account, ensuring the confirmation of the same fact from two sources. The book of the universe testifies to His great might. It imparts to us the feeling that bringing the dead back to life is easy. This is what is intended here. That this point is made here in the form of a question and a reply makes it more emphatic. This is followed by the general comment that God has power over all things. Thus, bringing the dead back to life is included within His limitless power.

AS RESURRECTION TAKES PLACE

Having referred to bringing the dead back to life, the chapter paints a picture of reckoning and accountability as though we see all this before our eyes: *And on a Day when will be presented those who were ungrateful to the fire saying: Is not this The Truth? They would say: Yea! By our Lord! He will say: Then, experience the punishment because you had been ungrateful!* (46:34)

The scene here begins with a narrative, or an introduction to a narrative: *And on a Day when will be presented those who were ungrateful to the fire saying:* The audience are waiting for the narrative describing what will happen, but instead of a description, the scene is present before our eyes, with a dialogue taking place: *Is not this The Truth?* What a question! It falls like a hammer on the heads of those who used to reject the truth, ridicule the message and hasten the punishment they were warned against. Now they are face to face with the truth they used to deny. They arrive at an answer, in fear and humility: *They would say: Yea! By our Lord!*, the very Lord whose Messenger they rejected and whose Lordship they denied. Now they swear by Him affirming the truth they once denied.

At this point, the matter reaches maximum rebuke. The dialogue is over and the issue is settled: *He will say: Then, experience the punishment because you had been ungrateful!* (46:34) It is just an answer to a simple question: the crime is seen in full clarity and the criminal admits his guilt. The outcome is settled.

This scene is portrayed very speedily. This is deliberate because the confrontation is decisive. There is no room for argument. They used to deny the truth; now they acknowledge it and are made to suffer the consequences.

Following this scene that decisively spells out the fate of the ungrateful, and the one that touches the hearts of a group from a different world, the chapter makes its final statement. It instructs the

Prophet to remain patient with them and not to hasten their punishment. He has seen what awaits them, which is close at hand.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions,** (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QUESTIONS

What inferences, judgments or conclusions does this sign make?
What are my most fundamental inferences or conclusions based on this Quranic sign?
Here is the information.
How are you interpreting it?
What is it telling you?
What meaning would you give to it?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to explain the inferences in these Quranic signs.
I was able to gather the information the Quranic signs give.

LESSON 67(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY COMPARING ANALOGOUS SITUATIONS: REFRAME INSIGHTS TO NEW CONTEXTS

In comparing analogous situations and transferring insights to new contexts, the example of the pilgrimage to Makkah and the Kabah comes to mind.

The Arabs had been practicing the pilgrimage for centuries. While the pilgrimage had been originally established by Abraham and his son, Ishmael for the worship of the One God, over time, the beliefs changed. People would still perform the pilgrimage to Makkah and the Kabah, but now the Kabah was filled with idols whom they worshipped. It became their custom to circumambulate the Kabah naked.

The life of the Prophet, so important in Islam, consist of the words which he spoke, the laws he brought, the deeds he performed, things he remained silent about or did not disagree with and deeds he actually performed in his lifetime without telling others that they should themselves perform them. The Traditions of the Prophet, then, are his words and his conduct. These become the rules of Islam which are divided into two groups: first, those which existed before Islam but were confirmed by the Prophet (signed rules); second, those which had not existed previously but were established by Islam (created rules). Besides these signed and created rules and the words and deeds of the Prophet, a third principle can also be perceived. It is my belief that it is the most sensitive. It is the method that the Prophet used.

The Prophet preserved the form, the container of a custom which had deep roots in society, one which people had gotten used to from generation to generation and one which was practiced in a natural manner, but he changed the contents, the spirit, the direction and the practical application of customs in a revolutionary, decisive and immediate manner.

He was inspired by a particular method which he uses in social combat. Without producing negative results, without containing any of the weak points of the other methods, his method contained the positive characteristics of the others. Through the customs of society which apply the brakes, he quickly attained his social goals. His revolutionary method was this: he maintained the container of a social tradition but inwardly changed the contents.

Before Islam, there was a custom of total ablution that was both a belief and a superstition. The pre-Islamic Arabs believed that when

a person had sexual intercourse, he or she incarnated jinn (spirits which inhabit the earth), thereby rendering both body and soul unclean. Until he or she found water and performed a total ablution, the jinn could not be exorcised.

Another example is the pilgrimage to Makkah. Before Islam, it was an Arab custom, full of superstitious ancestor worship. It was a glorified type of idol worship, holding economic advantage for the Quraysh tribe whereby the Kabah was filled with idols that were worshiped by the people. It had gradually come to assume this form from the time of Abraham. The Prophet was commanded to keep the form of the pre-Islamic custom of pilgrimage, as Abraham, the Friend of God, had built the Kabah for the worship of the One God, but through God's guidance, he changed the content. Now the pilgrimage was practiced to worship the One God.

The basis of the pilgrimage had been twofold: To protect the economic interests of the Quraysh merchants in Makkah and to create an artificial need among the Arab tribes for the Quraysh nobility. It was revealed to the Prophet of Islam to take this form and change it into a most beautiful and deep rite founded upon the unity of God and the oneness of humanity.

The Prophet, with his revolutionary stand, took the pilgrimage of the idol-worshipping tribes and changed it into a completely opposite rite. It was a revolutionary leap. As a result, while the Quraysh leaders opposed him because of their concern that they would lose their means of income, the Arab people underwent no anguish, no loss of values or beliefs, but rather, revived the truth and cleansed an ancient custom. They moved easily from idol worship to unity. Suddenly, they had left the past. Their society was not aware that the foundations of idol worship had been torn down. This leap, this revolutionary social method found within the (Quranic Sunnah) of the Prophet preserved the outer form, but changed its content. It maintained the container as a permanent element but changed and transformed the content. The Prophet, through the inspired method of his work, showed us that if we understand and can put his method into action, we can behave in a most enlightened and correct way.

A clear-visioned intellectual, confronted by outdated customs, ancient traditions, a dead culture and a stagnant religious and social order, takes up the mandate of the Prophet rather than submit to prejudices from the past. By this method one can reach revolutionary goals without the danger of revolution, on one hand, and without opposing the basis of faith and ancient social values on the other. By doing so, one does not remove oneself from people, nor does one become a stranger on whom people may turn and condemn. This

method works because the Prophet received knowledge from the divine Infinite, because he asked for the help of revelation and because he made use of what he received.

It was revealed to the Prophet of Islam to take the form of the pilgrimage and change it into a most beautiful and deep rite founded upon the unity of God and the oneness of humanity.

The conservative, at whatever cost, tries, to the last bit of his strength, to keep his customs—even if it means sacrificing himself and others. The revolutionary, on the other hand, wants to change everything into another form all at once. He wants to annihilate everything, to suddenly jump— whether or not society is prepared to leap in that direction. When the conservative senses the possibility of revolution, he turns to anger, dictatorship, and extensive public murders not only against his enemies but also against the people themselves. A reformer, on the other hand, always gives a corrupter the opportunity to destroy. The Prophet, through the inspired method of his work, showed us that if we understand and can put his method into action, we can behave in a most enlightened and correct way.[4]

The power of a Quranic concept is not limited by the ability you have to use it. Quranic thinkers make use of concepts in order to better their skills in understanding the Quran. It is through practice that they use these concepts by applying them to new situations, that is, by putting the concepts into practice.

Quranic thinkers focus on the basic Quranic concepts. You are encouraged to be able to reframe Quranic concepts, taking the Quranic form and changing the contents in modeling what Prophet Muhammad did.

QURANIC CHAPTER 51: THE WINNOWING WINDS (AL-DHARIYAT)

SIGNS 51:1-51:23

Makkah: *By the winnowing winds*
of ones that winnow (51:1)
by the burden-bearers, the ones who carry a heavy burden (51:2)
and the ones that run with ease (51:3)
and the ones who distribute the command, (51:4)
truly, what you are promised is that which is sincere. (51:5)
And, truly, the judgment is that which falls. (51:6)
By the heaven that is full of tracks, (51:7)
you are ones who are at variance in your sayings. (51:8)
He is misled there by he who was misled. (51:9)
Perdition to those who guess, (51:10)

ones who are inattentive because of obstinacy. (51:11)
They ask: When will the Day of Judgment be? (51:12)
A Day when they are tried over the fire: (51:13)
Experience your test. This is that for which
you had been seeking to hasten. (51:14)
Truly, the ones who are God-conscious
will be in the Garden and springs, (51:15)
ones who take what their Lord gave them.
Truly, they had been before this
—ones who are doers of good. (51:16)
They had been slumbering little during the night. (51:17)
And at the breaking of the day, they ask for forgiveness. (51:18)
And there is an obligation from their wealth
for the one who begs and the one who is deprived. (51:19)
On the earth are signs for the ones that are certain (51:20)
and in yourselves. Will you not, then, perceive? (51:21)
And in the heaven is your provision as you are promised (51:22)
by the Lord of the heaven and the earth.
It is, truly, The Truth just as you yourselves speak. (51:23)

COMMENTARY°

This chapter has a special character. It begins by mentioning four forces that work by God's command, using ambiguous terms which give us an initial impression that we are being introduced to thing wrapped in secrecy. God Almighty makes an oath by these four forces to emphasize a certain matter: (51:1-51:6)

The words used in this opening for those four forces mentioned in the oath are not usually used to refer to immediately recognized objects. They invite questions and requests for explanation. Indeed, their very sounds impart this feeling of ambiguity, which is perhaps intended so as to give the chapter its particular aura.

The first oath is hardly stated when it is followed by a second. God states this oath: (51:7-51:8) What you say is inconsistent, based on conjecture, not fact.

With this particular opening and by its general drift, the chapter sets itself a particular objective, which is the establishment of a bond between the human heart and the sky, or rather what lies beyond the reach of human perception and known only to God. The human heart will thus become free of the constraints of this world, unchained by anything that prevents it from being dedicated to God's service. It will then be ready to move unhindered towards Him.

Since preoccupation with one's livelihood and what the future

may bring with regard to it is one of the hardest of these hindrances, the chapter takes particular care to free man of it, and to reassure him so that his heart turns to God, free of earthly chains. References to this point are found in several places in the chapter. For example, explicit references include: *And in the heaven is your provision as you are promised* (51:22) and *Truly, God, He is The Provider, The Possessor of Strength, The Sure.* (51:58) Other references are implicit, as in the sign describing the attitude of the God-conscious towards money. *And there is an obligation from their wealth for the one who begs and the one who is deprived.* (51:19) Likewise, the chapter describes Abraham's hospitality and the welcome he gave to his guests, or rather the angels he thought to be his guests. When they greeted him, he went straight to his household and brought a fat calf, yet prior to their arrival at his doorstep, they were total strangers to him.

Thus, we see in the picture the chapter draws early on the main characteristics of those who are God-conscious: dedication to God, worship at night, sacrifice of money, assigning a portion of it to the poor and the deprived: *Experience your test. This is that for which you had been seeking to hasten. Truly, the ones who are God-conscious will be in the Garden and springs, ones who take what their Lord gave them. Truly, they had been before this—ones who are doers of good. They had been slumbering little during the night. And at the breaking of the day, they ask for forgiveness. And there is an obligation from their wealth for the one who begs and the one who is deprived.* (51:15-51:19)

To achieve the same purpose, the chapter directs our attentions to God's signs on earth and within ourselves, while also emphasizing that provisions are given by heaven. We must not, therefore, give undue importance to its immediate means on earth: *On the earth are signs for the ones that are certain and in yourselves. Will you not, then, perceive? And in the heaven is your provision as you are promised.* (51:20-51:22)

The same may be said about the reference to the building of the skies with ample space, while the earth has been made easy for people to traverse, and to the fact that all creatures are created in pairs. All this leads to the all-important advice that we should all turn to God paying full heed to the warnings given by His Messenger: *And We built the heaven with potency. And, truly, We are ones who extend wide. And the earth, We spread it forth. How excellent are the ones who spread! And of everything We created pairs so that perhaps you will recollect. So run away towards God. Truly, I am to you a clear warner from Him.* (51:47-51:50)

The chapter concludes with a statement reiterating the same

message, making clear the purpose of creating humans and jinn, and their major roles in life: *And I created not jinn and humankind but that they worship Me. I want no provision from them nor want I that they feed Me. Truly, God, He is The Provider, The Possessor of Strength, The Sure.* (51:56-51:58)

Thus the chapter plays on the same theme throughout, using different tunes but maintaining the same beat, directing our heart to look to the sky.

Sign (15:5) is mainly to the fact that God's promise always comes true: *Truly, what you are promised is that which is sincere.* (51:5) Another reference to this is made at the conclusion, where the ungrateful are issued with a clear warning: *And, truly, the impiety of those who did wrong is like the impiety of their companions. So let them not seek to hasten the Judgment.* (51:59) This comes after the statement that implies that generations of ungrateful seem to have recommended to each other that they reject God's messengers: *There approached not those who were before them any Messenger but that they said: One who is a sorcerer or one who is possessed! Counseled they this to one another? Nay! They are a folk, ones who are defiant!* (51:52-51:53) Thus the historical accounts in the chapter are closely related to its main theme, namely, pure and complete heart devotion to God, freeing it from all hindrances, strengthening its bond with heaven, first by faith and then by removing obstacles that prevent it from flying to that open horizon. (51:1-51:6)

The chapter begins with a quick beat, using ambiguous phrases to imply that it is talking about a serious matter that deserves our full attention. Inevitably though, the four ambiguous words used in the first four signs have made people ask questions, even in the very early days of the Quranic message, as they sought further explanation.

God states an oath by the winds that move and scatter things such as dust, grain, pollen, clouds and other material known or unknown to us; by the clouds carrying water and driven by God Almighty to wherever He pleases; by the ships that easily float on water making use of the characteristics God has given to water, shipping and the whole universe, and by the angels carrying God's commands and delivering them as He pleases, giving details as to what matters they are concerned with.

God states an oath by these four types of creation: *Truly, what you are promised is that which is sincere. And, truly, the judgment is that which falls.* (51:5-51:6) God has promised humanity that He will reward their good actions with what is better, and that He will requite their bad deeds with what is bad. If He delays holding them to ac-

count during their lives on earth, He will not ignore doing so in the life to come, where all reckoning and accounting will inevitably take place: *And, truly, the judgment is that which falls.* (51:6) The promise is undoubtedly true, and will be fulfilled in either life. He has also promised people that their sustenance, in plenty or limited measure, is guaranteed. Again His promise in this matter is true.

The same may be said about the second oath: *By the heaven that is full of tracks, you are ones who are at variance in your sayings. He is misled there by he who was misled.* (51:7-51:9) This oath is by the sky that is perfectly built, with pathways that are carefully interconnected, like the links of a chain. This may be one form clouds take as they gather in the sky, looking like a watery or sandy surface during or after a windy period. On the other hand, this description may be true of the permanent order of orbits that are perfectly coordinated and probably interconnected.

The section goes on to state that the ungrateful are deluded about the major question of the life to come. Their opinions are without a firm or true basis. They argue and dispute about a clear question of truth.

It then goes on to portray the Day of Judgment in such a way as they can actually see it: (51:10-51:14)

Such people indulge in blind guessing. It is God who invokes their killing. How terrible! Needless to say, such an invocation is a firm sentence, one that is certain to be enforced. *Perdition to those who guess.* (51:10) Further clarification of their identity is added: *Ones who are inattentive because of obstinacy.* (51:11) They are so steeped in delusion and falsehood that they are unable to wake themselves up. The chapter shows them to be totally unaware of anything around them, as if they are excessively drunk. They cannot see for themselves something that is very clear to anyone with a sound mind. *They ask: When will the Day of Judgment be?* (51:12) It is not a question that seeks information; rather, it is an expression of doubt and denial. Therefore, the chapter shows them their position on that day which they claim to be highly improbable: *A Day when they are tried over the fire:* (51:13) They will burn in the fire just as some metals are exposed to fire to determine their make up. This burning is coupled with strong remonstration: *Experience your test. This is that for which you had been seeking to hasten.* (51:14) A quick scene showing their miserable end is the most fitting answer to their question that sought no information. This powerful scene of their end contrasts with the state of confusion that plagues their lives. Moreover, it confirms that Gods invocation of their deaths is fulfilled in a most terrible way.

Next, a contrasting image is drawn. This depicts a different group, reassured in their certainty, eager to do what is good without boasting about it, fully awake at night when they volunteer their night worship: (51:15-51:19)

This group are fully alert, sensitive to the fact that God watches them and, therefore, they carefully watch their own behavior. *Truly, the ones who are God-conscious will be in the Garden and springs, ones who take what their Lord gave them. Truly, they had been before this—ones who are doers of good.* (51:15-51:16) God grants them blessings in abundance as a reward for what they do in this their first life, worshipping Him as if they see Him and realizing that He sees them: *Ones who take what their Lord gave them. Truly, they had been before this—ones who are doers of good.* (51:16) Their desire to excel is portrayed in a splendid image: *They had been slumbering little during the night. And at the breaking of the day, they ask for forgiveness.* (51:17-51:18) They are the ones who stay up at night when others are fast asleep. They turn to their Lord, appealing to Him to forgive them their sins. They sleep but little during the night, preferring to address their Lord and enjoy the pleasure of being in close contact with Him, when no one else is aware of that contact.

This is their situation with regard to their relations with God. As for their relations with people and their attitude to money, these people are of the type that is keen to do good:*And there is an obligation from their wealth for the one who begs and the one who is deprived.* (51:19) They not only give a share of what they have to those who ask for help and the one who is too shy to ask and thus remains deprived of help, but they make that a rightful share, committing themselves to it as though they are duty bound to do so even though it is voluntary.

This point fits well with the treatment of the issue of possessions and earnings in the chapter, as it helps to free the believer's heart of the shackles of personal greed and their preoccupation with livelihood. It also serves to prepare us for the next section of the chapter.

These signs: *On the earth are signs, for the ones that are certain and in yourselves. Will you not, then, perceive? And in the heaven is your provision as you are promised by the Lord of the heaven and the earth. It is, truly, The Truth just as you yourselves speak.* (51:20-51:23) turn our attentions to the countless signs testifying to God's Oneness, both on earth and within ourselves. They also guide us to look to heaven for our means of sustenance, as it is all measured. They finish with a great oath by God Himself, the Lord of the heavens and earth, confirming that the message given to them from Him is absolutely true.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QUESTIONS

Quranic thinkers focus on the basic Quranic concepts. You are encouraged to be able to reframe Quranic concepts, taking the Quranic form and changing the contents in modeling what Prophet Muhammad did.

Was Prophet Muhammad in a position to know?
What would someone need to be in a position to know?
Could the Prophet have directly seen or heard, or would he have to have reasoned to what he knew?
What do we know about the Prophet's expertise and experience?
What experience would you need to have to be an expert?
What must you have studied?
What does he claim about this issue?
Where did he get his information?
Is there reason to doubt him?
Has he been reliable in the past?
Does he have anything to gain by convincing others?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to respond to the following in class:

What evidence do the above signs give?
Why would the facts be true?
What assumptions are you making?
Do you have reason to think your assumptions are true?

QURANIC CHAPTER 51: THE WINNOWING WINDS (AL-DHARIYAT)

SIGNS 51:24-51:46

Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (51:24)

Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (51:25)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (51:26)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (51:27)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (51:28)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (51:29)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (51:30)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (51:31)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (51:31)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (51:32)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (51:33)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (51:34)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (51:35)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (51:36)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (51:37)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (51:38)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (51:39)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (51:40)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (51:41)
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad (51:42)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (51:43)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (51:44)
Makkah: Book 25: Salih and the People of Thamud (51:45)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (51:46)

LESSON 67(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY DEVELOPING ONE'S PERSPECTIVE: CREATING OR EXPLORING ARGUMENTS

Uncritical thinkers who exhibit selfishness similar to the ungrateful around Prophet Muhammad tended to assume that their own view of things was the only correct way to see the world. They tried to manipulate the views of others to their own advantage.

Fair-minded Quranic thinkers are like our beloved Prophet who followed the way of Prophet Abraham. Prophet Abraham recognized that his own way of thinking and interpreting the world around him required insight and experience through trial and error. He went through a critical analysis of his experience. He questioned the commonly held belief of the people around him. For his part, he explored his own beliefs and his own reasoning and theories. This was essential to his thinking and behavior. Once he experienced this, he was certain of his perspectives and could speak about them with deep insight.

QURANIC CHAPTER 51: THE WINNOWING WINDS (AL-DHARIYAT)

SIGNS 51:47-51:60

Makkah: *And We built the heaven with potency.*
And, truly, We are ones who extend wide. (51:47)
And the earth, We spread it forth.
How excellent are the ones who spread! (51:48)
And of everything We created pairs
so that perhaps you will recollect. (51:49)
So run away towards God.
Truly, I am to you a clear warner from Him.
(51:50) *And make not with God any other god.*
Truly, I am to you a clear warner from Him. (51:51)
There approached not those who were before them
any Messenger but that they said:
One who is a sorcerer or one who is possessed! (51:52)
Counseled they this to one another?
Nay! They are a folk, ones who are defiant! (51:53)
So turn ***you*** *away from them that* ***you*** *be not*
one who is reproached. (51:54)
And remind, for, truly, the reminder profits
the ones who believe. (51:55)
And I created not jinn and humankind
but that they worship Me. (51:56)
I want no provision from them
nor want I that they feed Me. (51:57)

Truly, God, He is The Provider,
The Possessor of Strength, The Sure. (51:58)
And, truly, the impiety of those who did wrong
is like the impiety of their companions.
So let them not seek to hasten the Judgment. (51:59)
Then, woe to those who disbelieved in that Day of theirs
that they are promised. (51:60)

COMMENTARY°

These signs (51:47-51:51) take us back to the great universal exhibition the chapter presented in its opening, providing here yet another image the Quran puts before our eyes and minds. Further references are added to God's signs, linking that provided by Noah and his people with that of the heavens, the earth and other creatures. This culminates with a call to humanity to flee to their Lord, submitting themselves to Him and associating no partners with Him.

The same applies to the reference to the earth and its being spread out: *And the earth, We spread it forth. How excellent are the ones who spread!* (51:48)

This is a fascinating truth that reveals the basic rule common to all creation on earth, and possibly in the universe. *And of everything We created pairs so that perhaps you will recollect.* (51:49) As it stands, the statement does not limit the pairs to rule to the earth. It is clearly seen among living creatures, but the phrase, all things, also includes inanimate objects. Therefore, the statement means that both animate and inanimate things are created in pairs.

These signs referring to the great universe, the width of the earth and the system of creation all culminate in a call on people to flee to God, the Creator of all, shedding all that shackles their souls, acknowledging His absolute unity: *So run away towards God. Truly, I am to you a clear warner from Him. And make not with God any other god.* (51:50-51:51) Use of the words *run away* here is very significant. It points to the burdens, shackles and handcuffs that restrain people, pulling them towards the earth and its material life, preventing free movement and ensuring they are always restrained. Most cogent among these are the restraints of earning one's livelihood, maintaining ones income and preoccupation with improving ones lot. Therefore, the call to shed all these and flee to God, alone, without partners, is very powerful. It reminds people, twice in succession, that they have no excuse for not doing so: *Truly, I am to you a clear warner from Him.* (51:50-51)

Next we have a comment on the references to earlier Messengers mentioned in the chapter: Thus whenever a Messenger came to those

that lived before them. (51:52-51:55)

It is the same nature common to all the ungrateful. They all give the same response to the divine message: *There approached not those who were before them any Messenger but that they said: One who is a sorcerer or one who is possessed!* (51:52) This is exactly what the Arab ungrateful said. It is as if one generation of ungrateful handed down such a legacy to the next in a continuing process. Needless to say, there was no such handing down. It is all in the nature of transgression and unbelief whereby the present ungrateful ones and their predecessors are brought together.

The natural result of this repeated stand is that the Prophet should not pay any attention to what the ungrateful say. He is not responsible for them as they choose to remain in error. He has spared no effort in trying to get them to follow divine guidance: *So turn you away from them that you be not one who is reproached.* (51:54) His only task is to remind people and to continue to give them reminders, no matter how persistent they are in their rejection of the truth: *And remind, for, truly, the reminder profits the ones who believe.* (51:55) Such reminders will not benefit the hardened ungrateful. Yet the task assigned to God's Messengers is to give such reminders. It is not within their ability to ensure that people follow proper guidance. That is outside their remit. It is God alone who gives guidance.

The last note in the chapter explains the meaning of fleeing to God and shedding all burdens and encumbrances in order to fulfil the mission for which He created people: *And I created not jinn and humankind but that they worship Me. I want no provision from them nor want I that they feed Me. Truly, God, He is The Provider, The Possessor of Strength, The Sure.* (51:56-51:58)

The Quran strengthens this feeling, letting us overcome our concerns about our livelihood and our selfish desires. Everybody's livelihood is guaranteed by God. Needless to say, He needs neither sustenance nor food from them when He asks them to spend some of their money on those who are in need: *I want no provision from them nor want I that they feed Me. Truly, God, He is The Provider, The Possessor of Strength, The Sure.* (51:57-51:58) What this means in effect is that a believer's incentive to work and exert his best efforts in discharging his duties of building human life on earth is not to earn a livelihood. His incentive is to fulfil the meaning of worship, which requires him to exert his best efforts. Thus his mind is focused on the fulfilment of the worship concept in doing whatever he is doing. He is free of concerns about the results of this effort. These are, then, noble feelings, which can only exist within such a noble concept.

Thus do we understand some aspects of this great truth stated in a single short sign: *And I created not jinn and humankind but that they worship Me.* (51:56) This truth is great indeed; it can change how people live when it takes hold of their hearts.

In the light of this great truth, the chapter concludes with a warning to the wrongdoers who hasten the fulfilment of Gods warnings: *And, truly, the impiety of those who did wrong is like the impiety of their companions. So let them not seek to hasten the Judgment. Then, woe to those who disbelieved in that Day of theirs that they are promised.*(51:59-51:60)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What is the difference between important and trivial?
What are his people like? What kinds of people are there?
What is the difference between right and wrong?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I followed the following guidelines:

Arrive on time for class.

Teachers do not take lateness lightly.

Position yourself in the classroom to focus on the subject matter; consider the best location for:

listening
asking questions
seeing visual materials
discussing—not only with the teacher but also your classmates

LESSON 68. CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

Quranic knowledge can be divided into multiple categories as this knowledge served as the basis for the development of Islamic sciences over the centuries. There are concepts that are basic to the study of Anthropology, History, Political Science, Mathematics, Logic and so forth. Understanding the interdisciplinary connections of the Quranic sacred text, take relevant concepts, knowledge and insight from the Quranic signs so that you are continuously finding connections between various categories of knowledge whether it be the basic principles of the arts or science.

Quranic critical thinkers:

> ... do not allow the somewhat arbitrary distinctions between academic subjects to control their thinking. When considering issues which transcend subjects, they bring relevant concepts, knowledge, and insights from many subjects to the analysis. They make use of insights into one subject to inform their understanding of other subjects. There are always connections between subjects: language and logic; history, geography, psychology, anthropology, physiology; politics, geography, science, ecology; math, science, economics.[5]

INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

Science: In doing research in the sciences, Quranic thinkers record from in depth observation, collecting as much information as possible and then critiquing their analysis of the gathered information so that they can draw the best possible inference through the use of inductive reasoning. *He Who taught by the pen. He taught the human being what he knows not.* (96:4-96:5)

Politics: Quranic thinkers try to obtain their own inferences after listening to .... *what is said and follow the fairer of it. Those are those whom God guided. Those, they are imbued with intuition.* (39:17-39:18) After listening to all opinions, they try to arrive at the best of the varying opinions as you differ in what you say. (51:8)

Education: Education in schools after listening to .... *what is said and follow the fairer of it* calls on students to learn all types of concepts, faiths and ideas and then choose their own.

Psychology: Our ability to reason (our cognitive system: *Will you not be reasonable?*) comes from our rational soul (*nafs-i natiqah*). We use our reason to help us regulate our animal soul (see Quran 12:53; *nafs-i ammarah*), our emotions and behavior by keeping them in a state of equilibrium, balance or moderation, on the Straight Path.

Note for the Teacher: Do not allow the somewhat arbitrary distinctions between academic subjects to control their thinking. When considering issues

which transcend subjects, they bring relevant concepts, knowledge, and insights from many subjects to the analysis. They make use of insights into one subject to inform their understanding of other subjects. There are always connections between subjects: language and logic; history, geography, psychology, anthropology, physiology; politics, geography, science, ecology; math, science, economics.[5]

QURANIC CHAPTER 88: THE OVERWHELMING EVENT (AL-GHASHIYAH)

SIGNS 88:1-88:26

Makkah: *Approached you the discourse*
of the Overwhelming Event? (88:1)
Faces on that Day will be ones that are humbled, (88:2)
ones that work and ones that are fatigued, (88:3)
roasting in a hot fire. (88:4)
They will be given to drink from boiling receptacles. (88:5)
Is it not that there is no food for them but a thorny fruit. (88:6)
It will not fatten nor will it avail hunger. (88:7)
Faces on that Day will be ones that are pleasant, (88:8)
ones who are well-pleased by their endeavoring (88:9)
in a magnificent Garden. (88:10)
They will hear no babble in it. (88:11)
In it is a running spring. (88:12)
In it are exalted couches (88:13)
and goblets that are set down (88:14)
and cushions arrayed (88:15)
and rugs, ones that are dispersed. (88:16)
Will they not, then, look on the camel, how it was created? (88:17)
And of the heaven, how it was lifted up? (88:18)
And the mountains, how they were hoisted up? (88:19)
And the earth, how it was stretched out? (88:20)
Then, remind for you are only one who reminds. (88:21)
You are not over them one who is a register of their deeds. (88:22)
But whoever turned away and is one who is ungrateful, (88:23)
God will punish him with the greater punishment. (88:24)
Truly, to Us is their reversion. (88:25)
Again, truly, on Us is their reckoning. (88:26)

COMMENTARY°

This chapter is a deep and calm melody which invites meditation, hope and fear. It warns us to be ready for the day of reckoning. It carries a person's heart into two vast spheres: the life hereafter with

its limitless world and moving scenes; and the visible sphere of existence, with the signs God has spread in all the creatures sharing this existence held out for everyone to see. After these two great scenarios, the chapter reminds us of the reckoning on the Day of Judgment, of God's power, and of the inevitable return to Him. Throughout, the style is characterized by its depth of tone: it is calm but highly effective, powerful and awesome.

With this introduction: *Approached you the discourse of the Overwhelming Event?* (88:1), the section wants to make hearts turn back to God, to remind men of His signs in the universe, His reckoning on the Day of Judgment, and His certain reward. It starts with this inquiry, which implies greatness and indicates a positive statement. It points out that the question of the hereafter had already been affirmed and earlier reminders had been given. The Day of Resurrection is here given a new name, "the Overwhelming Event", which suggests that a calamity will befall humanity and envelop them with its horrors. It is one of the many evocative names mentioned in the chapters included in this volume. Others are: The Overwhelming, The Deafening, The Stunning Event. They all suit the general tone and nature of these chapters.

Whenever the Prophet listened to this chapter, he felt that the address: *Approached you* was directed to him personally, as if he was receiving it from his Lord directly for the first time. He was extremely moved by this. The reality of this divine address was always present in his mind. A tradition related by Umar ibn Mayma says that the Prophet once passed by a woman who was reciting this chapter. When she recited: *Approached you the discourse of the Overwhelming Event?* he stopped to listen and said: Yes, I have heard it.

The address is nevertheless a general one, directed at everyone who hears the Quran. The story of the Overwhelming Event is an oft-repeated theme in the Quran, reminding people of the hereafter, warning them of its punishment, and promising its rewards. It is a story which aims to awaken people's consciences, to arouse their fear and apprehension as well as their hope and expectancy.

The chapter opens with a question: *Approached you the discourse of the Overwhelming Event?* (88:1) It follows this by relating part of its story: (88:2-88:7) The scene of suffering and torture is given before the scene of joy, because the former is closer to the connotations of the name given to the event, the Overwhelming Event, and the impressions it generates.

Thus we are told that there are on that day faces which look humble, downcast and worn out. They belong to people who have labored and toiled without satisfactory results. Indeed the results they

get are a total loss, which increases their disappointment, and causes looks of humiliation and exhaustion on their faces. *Ones that work and ones that are fatigued.* (88:3) They had labored and toiled for something other than God's cause. Their work was totally for themselves and their families, for their own ambitions in the life of this world. Then they come to reap the fruits of their toil, not having made any provision for their future life. Therefore, they face the end with a mixture of humiliation, exhaustion, misery and hopelessness *roasting in a hot fire.* (88:4)

The Arabic text uses the term dry thorns. (88:5-88:7) However, some commentators say that it refers to a tree of fire in hell.

On the other hand we find: (88:8-88:16) Here are faces bright with joy, animated with pleasure. They are well pleased with what they are given. The Quran gives precedence to this kind of happiness over the joys of heaven. Then it describes heaven and the joys it affords to its happy dwellers *in a magnificent Garden.* (88:10) It is glorious and sublime, with lofty positions and elevated gardens.

The description of height and elevation gives us a special feeling: *They will hear no babble in it.* (88:11) This expression creates a sense of calmness, peace, reassurance, love, satisfaction and pleasant discourse between friends.

The description: *In it is a running spring* (88:12) combines a sense of quenching thirst, with beauty of movement and flow. Running water gives a sense of liveliness and youth. It is pleasant to the eye and the mind, and touches the depths of human feeling.

The adjective, *exalted*: *In it are exalted couches* (88:13) gives an impression of cleanliness and purity so they are ready for drinking. *And goblets that are set down* (88:14)—there is no need to order or prepare them. *And cushions arrayed* (88:15)

When this account of the hereafter comes to its close, the chapter refers to the present world, which is in itself a manifestation of the power and perfect planning of God, the Almighty: (88:17-88:20) These four short signs join together the boundaries of the world of the Arabs — the first people to be addressed by the Quran. They also group together the prominent ends of creation in the universe as they speak of the sky, earth, mountains and camels. The last of these stands for all animals, although the camel has its own distinctive features and a special value for Arabs.

The Quran: *And of the heaven, how it was lifted up?* (88:18) repeatedly directs our reflective faculties to the skies. The desert people should be the first to undertake this, because in the desert the sky is much richer and more inspiring—if it has a unique existence.

For the Arab in particular, a mountain is a refuge and a friend.

And the mountains, how they were hoisted up? (88:19)

The earth is obviously outstretched and made suitable for human life and its full and varied range of activities. *And the earth, how it was stretched out?* (88:20) The human being could not have made it so, as its creation was completed long before his existence. So should we not consider who spread out the earth and made life feasible on it? Intelligent reflection on all these aspects will always inspire minds and excite souls into recognition of God, the Creator.

Having dealt first with the hereafter, and pointed out some apparent aspects of the universe, the chapter now addresses the Prophet, laying down the nature of his mission and limits of his role. It then concludes with a final reminder to humanity: (88:21-88:26)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Quranic content is understood by thinking, organized by thinking, analyzed by thinking, synthesized by thinking, evaluated by thinking, transformed by thinking.

You will learn that the Quran teaches you HOW to think through reading it, writing it, speaking it and listening (hearing) to it in any language with which you are familiar. Of course, it is best if this is done with the original Arabic revelation, but not knowing Quranic Arabic should not stop you from learning HOW to think Quranically. It is so powerful, it should come across in any language in which it has been well translated, that is, a translation as close as possible to the original, but making sense (not a literal, word-by-word) or a wordy interpretation for each sign rather than a translation. In reading it, dialogue with it by asking yourself: What is the purpose of this passage? Do I understand what is being said? When I read these signs, I work on the text, take it apart, predict it, test it. It is a very difficult process, very labor intensive. This is close reading. What's worth reading is worth reading well.

Write out a part in your own words in order to better understand it, not, of course, to try to compete with it. Ask yourself if you can reformulate it, elaborate on it and give an example. Speak about it. To communicate well, you need to know your audience and what it is that you want to say. In order for listening (hearing) to be effective, it must be active.

QUESTIONS

Learning and studying techniques
Your path for most effective learning is through knowing...

Visual/spatial learning
Learning, for visual-spatial learners, takes place all at once...

Learning as a student-athlete or student-performer
Indicators of a "kinesthetic intelligence" or body smarts...
Learning as an adult
Does higher education seem like a foreign culture to you?

Active learning
Active learning is experiential, mindful, and engaging...

Action learning
Action learning is a learning and problem-solving strategy for organizations...

Mathematical language learning strategies
In learning the language of mathematics, we follow the advice that practice make perfect, and patience a helpful virtue...

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confi dent you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I am able to raise basic issues.
I am probing beneath the surface of things.
I am discovering the structure of my own thought.
I am developing sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
I am arriving at judgments through my own reasoning.
I am learning to listen carefully to what others in my class say.
I am taking what others in my Quranic class say seriously.
I am beginning to look for reasons and evidence.
I am recognizing and reflecting on assumptions.
I am seeking examples, analogies and objections.
I am seeking to be empathetic to the Quranic point of view.
I am looking under the surface of things for the
meaning of the Quranic message.

APPENDIX 1: CORRELATION BETWEEN THE PRESENT ORDER OF CHAPTERS IN THE QURAN AND THEIR CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

1 = 96
2 = 68
3 = 73
4 = 74
5 = 1
6 = 111
7 = 81
8 = 87
9 = 92
10 = 89
11 = 93
12 = 94
13 = 103
14 = 100
15 = 108
16 = 102
17 = 107
18 = 109
19 = 105
20 = 113
21 = 114
22 = 112
23 = 53
24 = 80
25 = 97
26 = 91
27 = 85
28 =95
29 = 106
30 = 101
31 = 75
32 = 104
33 = 77
34 = 50
35 = 90
36 = 86
37 = 54
38 = 38
39 = 7
40 = 72
41 = 36
42 = 25
43 = 35
44 = 19
45 = 20
46 = 56
47 = 26
48 = 27
49 = 28
50 = 17
51 = 10
52 = 11
53 = 12
54 = 15
55 = 6
56 = 37
57 = 31
57 = 34
59 = 39
60 = 40
61 = 41
62 = 42
63 = 43
64 = 44
65 = 45
66 = 46
67 = 51
68 = 88
69 = 18
70 = 16
71 = 71
72 = 14
73 = 21
74 = 23
75 = 32
76 = 52
77 = 67
78 = 69
79 = 70
80 = 78
81 = 79
82 = 82
83 = 84
84 = 30
85 = 29
86 = 83
87 = 2
88 = 8
89 = 3
90 = 33
91 = 60
92 = 4
93 = 99
94 = 57
95 = 47
96 = 13
97 = 55
98 = 76
99 = 65
100 = 78
101 = 59
102 = 24
103 = 22
104 = 63
105 = 58
106 = 49
107 = 66
108 = 64
109 = 61
110 = 62
111 = 48
112 = 5
113 = 9
114 = 110

NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION TO QURANIC THINKING BY HASHIM KAMALI

1. The rough equation that earlier Muslim scholars drew between the Islamic and Western conceptions of reason tended to be oblivious of the categories of reason and the Western critique of reason that divided it into "instrumental reason, critical reason, functional reason, abstract reason, imperialist reason, decentering reason" and the like. For details see Abdelwahab M. Elmessiri, "Features of the New Islamic Discourse," a Cairo conference paper, 1997: http:// www.21stcenturytrust.org/messiri.doc.

2. Some commentators have distinguished a total of 30 expressions that revolve around thinking over the *ayat*. See Abu Bakr al-Razi, *Tafsir al-Kabir* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1985), II, 222f.

3. Cf Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-'Ilm fi'l-Quran al-Karim* (Cairo: Maktaba Wahba, 1416/1996), 36.

4. Al-Isfahani, *Mufradat Alfaz al-Qur'an*, under "*Fikr*".

5. Cf., Karim Douglas Crow, "Islam and Reason" in *Al-Shajarah*, vol. 8, (2003),120-1.

6. Abbas Mahmud, "al-Aqqad, Al-Tafkir Faridah Islamiyyah" (Thinking is an Islamic Obligation) quoted in Jamal Badi and Mustapha Tajdin, *Creative Thinking: An Islamic Perspective*, 2nd edn. (Kuala Lumpur: International Islamic University Malaysia, 2005), 6.

7. Cf. al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-'Ilm*, 41-45 quoting ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's *Miftah Dar al-Sa'ada*, and 'Aqqad's book entitled *al-Tafkir Faridah Islamiyya* (Beirut: al-Matba'a al-'Asriyya, 1992).

8. Cf. al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-Ilm*, 200.

9. Cf .Ibid., 202.

10. Al-Raghib al-Isfahani, *Mufradat Alfaz al-Quran* (Beirut: Dar al-Shamiyya, 1383/1964), 249.

11. Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i, *al-Mizan fi-Tafsir al-Quran* (Beirut: al-Mu'assasa al-'Alami, 1383/1964) II, 395.

12. Ala uddin al-Mattagi al-Hindi, *Kanz al-Ummah fi Sunan al-Aqwal wa'l-Af'al* (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risalah, 1383/1981), hadith no. 5873.

13. Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali, *Risalat al-Radd 'ala al-Laduniyya*, ed. 'Abd Allah Riyad Mustafa, (Damascus: Dar al-Hikma, 1986), 241.

14. CE Ahmad Fu'ad al-Ahwani, *al-Tarbiyah fi'l-Islam* (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif bi-Misr, 1968), 227-228.

15. Cf. Aziz al-Azmeh, *Arabic Thought and Islamic Societies* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 109.

16. Cf. Diane F. Halpern, *Thought and Knowledge: An Introduction to Critical Thinking* (Mahwah: New Jersey, Lawrence Erlbaum and Associates, 1996), 21.

17. Cf. Ibrahim B. Syed, "Critical Thinking" as online at http://www.lrfi. org/articles/articles_101_150/critical_thinking.htm.

(18. Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Lahore: Shah Muhammad Ashraf, reprint 1982), 127.

19. Malik Bin Nabi, *Intaj al-Mustashriqin* (Cairo: Maktabah 'Amir, 1990), 34.

20. Iqbal, op. cit., 139.

21. See for details Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, *What's Right with Islam is What's*

Right with America (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2004), 4-5.

22. Georg W. H. Hegel, *Philosophy of History* (New York: Dove Books, 1956), 109.

23. Louay Safi, "The Creative Mission of the Muslim Minorities in the West: Synthesizing the Ethos of Islam and modernity," a conference paper presented at Westminster University, London, England February 21, 2004: http://insight.org/articles/Current/MuslimMinorities.htm.

24. Cf., M.H. Kamali, "Islam, Rationality and Science," in Islam and Science, vol. 1, no. 2 (2003), 126f, see also Mehdi Golshani, "Philosophy of Science from the Qur'anic Perspective," in *Towards Islamisation of Disciplines* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1989), 73f.

25. Cf. Ishfaq Ahmad, "Research and Development Culture in the Islamic World: Past and Present Problems and Future Directions," in Abu Bakr Abdul Majeed et al. (eds.) *New Knowledge, Research and Development in the Muslim World* (Kuala Lumpur: Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia, 2004), 14-15.

26. See for a discussion Oliver Leaman, "Institutionalising Research and Development Culture in the Islamic and Non-Islamic World: A Comparative Perspective," in Abu Bakr Majeed, (ed.) *New Knowledge*, 50-51.

27. Malik bin Nabi, *Intaj al-Mustashriqin*, 26.

28. See for details Mohammad Hashim Kamali, "Issues in the Understanding of Jihad and Ijtihad" in *Islamic Studies* 41 (2002), 623 ff.

29. There is a chapter on *ijtihad* in M. H. Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1991, 3rd edn. 2003). See also my article "Issues in the Understanding of Jihad and Ijtihad" in *Islamic Studies*, 41 (2002), 617-635; and "Issues in the Legal Theory and Usul and Prospects for Reform" in *Islamic Studies*, 40 (2001), 1-21.

30. Sergio Moravia. *The Enigma of the Mind: The Mind-Body Problem in Contemporary Thought*, tr. S. Staton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. First published in Rome, 1986), 4-5.

31. See for example, Howard Gardner, *Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligence for the 21st Century* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

32. See for details Roger Garudy, "The Balance Sheet of Western Philosophy in this Century" in *Towards Islamisation of Disciplines* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1989), 399f.

33. Mehdi Golshani, "From Knowledge to Wisdom: A Qur'anic Perspective," in *Islamic Studies*, 44 (2005), 13.

34. Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Fiqh al-Awlawiyyat*, 68.

35. Cf., Al-Ahwani, *al-Tarbiyah fi'l-Islam*, 189.

36. Mohammad Hashim Kamali is Professor of Islamic Law and jurisprudence at the International Islamic University Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur. "Reading the Signs," Center for Islam and Science. Gale Group, 2006.

NOTES TO THE TEXT

1. See Ibn Ishaq.
2. See Introduction to this Book Year 9.
3. al-Ghazzali, *Deliverance from Error.*
4. Ali Shariati, *Shariati on Shariati.*
5. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Science and Civilization in Islam.*

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CRITICAL THINK[illegible]

AND THE CHRONOLOGICAL [illegible]

IN THE LIFE OF PROPHET MUHAMMAD

THE YEAR 10

OF THE REVELATION (4 BH/618-619 CE)

REVISED EDITION

INTRODUCTION BY
MOHAMMAD HASHIM KAMALI

LIBRARY OF ISLAM

Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series Year 10

Critical Thinking and the Chronological Quran in the Life of Prophet Muhammad

The Year 10

of the Revelation (4 BH/618-619 CE)

Revised Edition

Laleh Bakhtiar

Introduction by
Mohammad Hashim Kamali

Library of Islam

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THE 10TH YEAR OF THE REVELATION
MUHARRAM 1-DHU AL-HIJJA 29, 4 BH
AUGUST 29, 618 CE-AUGUST 17, 619 CE

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PREFACE

THE CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STUDIES TEXTBOOK SERIES

There are thirty books in this series. Books entitled *Book Year 1* to *Book Year 24* consist of one book for each year of the revelation. The chapters' or sections' signs (*ayat*) are presented according to the 558 *ruku* or sections of the 114 chapters of the Quran. They each include the relevant chapter (*surah*) or chapters (when they are short) or sections, *ruku* (when there are multiple sections in a particular chapter) in chronological order. The chapters are numbered according to the chronological order of the Quranic chapters provided by al-Azhar University as the officially accepted order of revelation. Each section (*ruku*) is followed by a commentary by one of the well-known commentators.

Book Year 10, the present volume, covers events from Muharram 1-Dhu al-Hijja 29, 4 BH/August 29, 618 CE-August 17, 619 CE.

Books 25-28 are devoted to the Quranic stories of all other Prophets and Messengers in order of their dates. *Book 25: Adam, Cain and Abel, Enoch (Idris), Noah, Hud and the People of Aad; Saleh and the People of Thamud; Book 26: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Jacob (Israel), Joseph and Job; Book 27: Moses, Aaron, Children of Jacob (Israel), Jethro (Shuayb), Joshua, Khidr and Samuel; Book 28: David, Solomon, Elijah (Ilyas), Elisha (Alyasa), Jonah (Younis), Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl), Ezra (Uzayr), Dhul Qarnayn (Cyrus the Great or Alexander the Great), Luqman, Zechariah, John the Baptist (Yahya), Mary and Jesus.* The last two are: *Book 29: The Life of Prophet Muhammad from Birth to the Revelation* and *Book 30: Teacher's Manual.* The last, *Book 30,* has been prepared for the teacher's Lesson Plans.

At the beginning of each lesson, there is an exercise in critical thinking skills. These consist of one of the following: **The Nine Intellectual Standards, The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** and **The Seven Moral Traits**. The Eight Elements contain thirty-five strategies. However there is no specific order as to how they should be learned and incorporated into our thinking process.

Once we understand the critical thinking skills and then apply them to the signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. Once the skills as presented in the Quranic message are put into practice with the grace of God, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behavior.

Each lesson is followed by questions for classroom discussion or for dialogue. At the end of each lesson there is an assessment/assignment for students to use while they are developing critical thinking skills as they hopefully learn HOW the Quran teaches critical thinking.

SOURCES

The sources for the history include the works of Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hashim, Waqidi, Ibn Sad and commentaries by Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn, Tustari and Sayyid Qutb. The sources for the commentaries of Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn and Tustari have been used with the permission of the publisher, the Royal Institute of Ahl al-Bayt in Jordan. They are available on their website www.altafsir.com.

The inclusion of excerpted commentaries (tafsir) by Sayyid Qutb's In the Shade of the Quran (available online) in this Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series is because Sayyid Qutb is considered by some extremist groups as their intellectual source. By including excerpts from his eighteen volume Quranic commentary, extremists cannot disclaim the importance of learning critical thinking as this series is to help young adults learn HOW to think using self-realization (tahqiq) and critical thinking (furqan) skills taught by the Quran. This in order to arm young adults with the ability to choose reason over any irrational extremist ideology that is presented to them.

TERMINOLOGY

All Quranic signs are translations from The Sublime Quran. For the Muslim, the Quran is the Word (Logos) of God. It is this Word of God that has inspired artists, artisans, poets, philosophers and writers, those who had been the exponents of Islamic culture and civilization for almost 1500 years. Yesterday and today's Muslim wants to know more about each Word that God chose for His revelation through the Quran. This realization, in turn, prompted the translation of The Sublime Quran, an attempt to give the sense of unity within the revelation to a non-Arabic speaking reader.

There are several points to note about the terminology used in the translation of the Quranic text and the commentaries.

1. The blessed Prophet did not bring a new religion; he came to confirm what was right in the messages of the previous Prophets. Does this translation speak to the universality of the Quran? The Quran tells the Prophet, the mercy to all of humanity, to speak to people in their own language. Following his example, in addition to the translation being unbounded by time, in several sensitive cases, the word chosen to translate an Arabic word is also of a universal or inclusive rather than a particular or exclusive nature. This adds to the broadening of the perspective and scope of the Quran so that it becomes inclusive rather than exclusive to one particular group of people. In other words, in this way a larger audience can relate to its message.

2. The actual word "Islam" comes from the verb, "to submit" (*aslama*), submission (*sallama*), and ones who submit (*muslimun*). The Quran refers to itself (the Quran) from the very beginning of the revelation (68:35).

3. As previously indicated, the four books (Book 25, Book 26, Book 27 and Book 28) are the stories of the other Prophets and Messengers mentioned in the Quran. While these stories do have lessons to be learned by the Prophet

and those who heard the revelations as well as for us today, they do not refer directly to Prophet Muhammad and his prophethood following the beginning of the revelation. What remains in these books of the Quranic signs in the 24 years of the chronological Quran relate directly to him, what he did and what he was told to say. This allows us to understand his life directly from the Quranic message, the Quranic Sunnah, without any interruption of the stories about previous Prophets and Messengers.

4. Most English translations of the Quran refer to the "Children of Israel." The word "Israel" when used in the Quran refers to Jacob, the patriarch of the children who followed him such as Joseph. Therefore, it should be the "Children of Jacob" as it appears in these texts.

5. The words "*kufr*" and "*kafir*" have been translated here as "ingratitude" and "ungrateful" where the context allows. This is the first meaning of the word and many of us in our lifetime have met Muslims who are "ungrateful." It is the ungrateful Muslims who practice intolerance by declaring anyone who says: Peace be upon you (*as-salam alaykum*) as a non-believer (with what is called *takfir*). In those cases, it would not be suitable to call them "unbelievers" or "infidels," but it is clearly appropriate to refer to them as being "ungrateful" and this would include the early Quraysh, ungrateful for God's revelation and prophethood of Muhammad, who ridiculed the Prophet and fought against the Quranic message of love, forgiveness and peace.

6. Yet another example of the use of inclusive language in an attempt to speak to people in their own language, is the use of God instead of Allah. Many English speaking Muslims, as well as many of the English translations of the Quran to date, use Allah when speaking English instead of God. The intention on the part of the speaker is to maintain a sense of piety. They feel that using Allah in English moves them in that direction. Many even claim that the word Allah cannot be translated.

However well-intentioned a person may be, when speaking English, the use of the word Allah instead of God, first of all, does not follow the Quranic verse that tells the Prophet to speak to people in their own language. Subsequently, it does not follow the Sunnah of the Prophet who did speak to people in their own language.

In addition, it creates a divide between Muslims who use the word and the English speaking people of various faiths to whom they are speaking. In effect, it creates the illusion that there is more than One God—Allah and God. The response of the English speaking person of another faith is to say: I do not understand your religion; you have a different God than I do and you call Him Allah.

It needs to be clearly explained to English speaking Muslims that, unlike what they may feel, they do not have a monopoly on the word Allah. Arabic speaking Christians and Arabic speaking Jews also refer to God as Allah. The Old Testament and New Testament, when translated into Arabic, use Allah for God.

English speaking Muslims, therefore, need to recall the message of the Quran that God is One (tawhid). In addition, the Prophet did not bring a new religion but confirmed what was correct in the messages of previous Prophets, namely, that God is One. Finally, they need to follow the example of the Prophet, as the Quran says he is the model or example to be followed, by speaking to people in their own language.

7. The Arabic language, much like old English, has the second person singular (masculine: anta (where the verb ends in *ka*). The English equivalent is the subject: "thou" or the object: "thee" or the possessive: "thy." As these are no longer in common usage in English, wherever the original Arabic uses one of these terms, the word "**you**" or "**your**" appear in bold font so that the reader knows the original was the second person singular. When the Quran is speaking directly to the Prophet, it uses the pronoun "thee" or "thou" so it is an important distinction to make.

Using you (second person plural) is done to help English speaking readers, recognizing that using the second person plural pronoun you (masculine: *antum* where the verb ends in masculine: *kum*) for God is to intimate that God is plural, the only sin in the Quran that is unforgivable. By putting the pronoun **you** in bold font indicates the true intention.

8. For the Arabic word "ayah," the English word used in these texts is "sign" rather than the Biblical term, "verse."

9. Several of the signs were abrogated over time. However the indication of a sign being abrogated was done after the complete revelation of the Quran. Whether or not a sign was later abrogated does not change the fact that the first Muslims who listened to the Quran, heard the signs that may have later been said to have been abrogated and that a hafez of the Quran recites all the signs as they appear in the original Arabic revealed to the Prophet. Whatever signs scholars later determined to be abrogated are still part of the Quran and, therefore, are not relevant to learning to be a Quranic critical thinker, learning HOW to think.

10. The first number that appears when the Quranic Chapters begin refers to the chapter number in the chronological order of the revelation so that Quranic Chapter 110 which was the last to be revealed is number 114 in the chronological order.

11. It is to be noted that whenever the name of Muhammad, Prophet Muhammad or the Prophet are used, one may say a silent prayer of blessings for him.

CRITICAL THINKING• COMPONENT

Quranic critical thinking (furqan, discernment) is a process that analyzes how we think. It is a 3-step process: **I**: Quranic critical thinkers apply the **Nine Intellectual Standards** (logic, being definitive, connected, appropriate, have worthiness, include numerous viewpoints, have right judgment, clarity, being fair and just) to: **II**: **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** (point of view, purpose, questions, information, inferences, concepts, assumptions, im-

plications): in order to develop: **III: The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** (belief in One God (tawhid), God-consciousness (taqwa), virtuous conduct (birr) or integrity through moral discipline, empowering constancy ('azm) and courage, persevering in goodness (sabara), love (hubb) or empathic altruism (ihsan) and being fair and just (rashad). The signs (ayat) in each section (ruku) teach any or every one of the **Nine Intellectual Standards** or any and every one of the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or any or every one of the **Seven Quranic Moral Traits.**

This is the key to critical thinking. We do not learn "what" to think, but, rather, "how" to think. Using the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** as an example, critical thinking can be summarized in the following sentence: Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** and consequences. We use **concepts,** ideas and theories to **interpret information** (data, facts and experiences) in order to **answer questions,** solve problems, and resolve issues.

The point of view in all cases is that of the Quranic message and the various individuals and groups that it addresses as this series is a course in Quranic Studies as well as a course in the chronological history of the life of the blessed Prophet (sira). Each student is encouraged to come up with his or her own questions and responses to those questions in order to learn how to become the Quranic critical thinker as the Quranic teaches us HOW to think.

It is important to note that there is no correct or incorrect answer. The important point is to go through the process with as many of the sections as one is able to do. Little by little, this will help each student or reader to develop into critical thinkers or "discerners" of the Quranic message creating a bond between them and the Quranic message.

Once we learn to analyze signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. It is important to note that the order of **The Nine Intellectual Standards** or **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or **The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** is not important. With the grace of God, once all are present, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behaviors.

THE NINE INTELLECTUAL STANDARDS

1. LOGIC (REASONABLE: 'AQALA, 'AQL)
2. DEFINITIVENESS (TO BE PRECISE: MUHKAMA)
3. CONNECTEDNESS (CONTAINING COMPLEXITIES AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS: (MUQTARIN)
4. APPROPRIATENESS (TO MAKE RELEVANT: SADID)
5. WORTHINESS (FOCUSING ON THE IMPORTANT, NOT TRIVIAL,

TO BE SIGNIFICANT: AHL)
6. NUMEROUS OR MULTIPLE VIEWPOINTS: 'DHARA'A)
7. RIGHT JUDGMENT (RUSHD)
8. CLARITY (UNDERSTANDABLE, TO BE CLEAR: TABAYYANA)
9. BEING FAIR AND JUST ('AQL, RIGHT-MINDED (RASHAD))

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES

1. **EMBODYING A POINT OF VIEW, FRAME OF REFERENCE, PERSPECTIVE (RECOLLECT, BEAR IN MIND, TAKE FOR GRANTED: TADHAKKUR)**
   - THINKING INDEPENDENTLY
   - DEVELOPING INSIGHT INTO EGO-CENTRICITY OR SOCIO-CENTRICITY
   - EXPLORING THOUGHTS UNDERLYING FEELINGS AND FEELINGS UNDERLYING THOUGHTS
   - DEVELOPING INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY
2. **GENERATING A PURPOSE, AIM, GOAL, OBJECTIVE: (CONSIDER: RA'A)**
   - CLARIFYING ISSUES OR CONCLUSIONS
   - CLARIFYING AND ANALYZING THE MEANINGS OF WORDS OR PHRASES
   - READING CRITICALLY: CLARIFYING OR DISCERNING THE SACRED TEXT
   - LISTENING CRITICALLY: THE ART OF SILENT DIALOGUE
3. **RAISING QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, ISSUES: (REFLECT: TAFAKKARA)**
   - PRACTICING DISCUSSION: CLARIFYING AND QUESTIONING INTERPRETATIONS
   - REASONING DIALOGICALLY: COMPARING INTERPRETATIONS
   - REASONING DIALECTICALLY: EVALUATING INTERPRETATIONS KNOWLEDGE, WISDOM
   - DEEP QUESTIONING
4. **USING INFORMATION, DATA, FACTS, OBSERVATIONS, EXPERIENCES, REASONED JUDGMENTS (EVIDENCE: BASIRAH)**
   - DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION: CLARIFYING VALUES AND STANDARDS
   - ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ACTIONS
   - DISTINGUISHING RELEVANT FROM IRRELEVANT INFORMATION
   - GIVING REASONS AND EVALUATING EVIDENCE
5. **MAKING INTERPRETATIONS, INFERENCES, CONCLUSION, SOLUTIONS (UNDERSTANDING: TABASSUR)**
   - ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ARGUMENTS AND INTERPRETATIONS
   - MAKING PLAUSIBLE INFERENCES OR INTERPRETATIONS
   - RECOGNIZING CONTRADICTIONS
   - NOTING SIGNIFICANT SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES
6. **UTILIZING CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS, PRINCIPLES, MODELS AND VOCABULARY (RECALL: IDHDHAKARA)**
   - COMPARING ANALOGOUS SITUATIONS: REFRAMING INSIGHTS TO NEW CONTEXTS

DEVELOPING ONE'S PERSPECTIVE: CREATING OR EXPLORING ARGUMENTS
MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS
COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE
THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING
7. MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PREPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED (OPINIONS: ZUNUN)
8. GENERATING IMPLICATIONS, CONSEQUENCES (PONDER, EVALUATE: TADABBUR)
GENERATING OR ASSESSING SOLUTIONS
EXPLORING IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES IN DETAIL

1. Embodying a **Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective** (Recollect, Bear in Mind, Take to Heart (*tadhakkur*)):Whenever we think, we think within a point of view. What is the Quranic point of view in these signs? Does the Quran follow universal intellectual values of clarity, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, logic, fairness?

2. Generating a **Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective** (Consider (*ra'a*)): My purpose in addressing the Quranic purpose in these signs is . . .? Know exactly what you are after. Make sure you are not operating with a hidden agenda and that your announced and real purposes are the same. Whenever we think, we think for a purpose. What is the Quran's fundamental purpose in revealing these signs? Are there multiple points of view?

3. Raising **Questions, Problems, Issues** (Reflect (*tafakkara*)): What is the key question I am trying to answer. State the question as clearly and precisely as you can. Details are very important.

4. Using **Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments** (Evidence (*basirah*)): Actively seek the information most relevant to the question. Include in that information options for action, both short-term and long-term. We use experiences, facts and data that the Quran gives us. What information does the Quran give in these signs? What information do I need to answer my question?

5. Making **Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusions, Solutions** (Understanding (*tabassur*)): After reasoning (discerning) the above points, decide what the best answer (conclusion) to the question is. What inferences, judgments or conclusions do these signs make? What are my most fundamental inferences or conclusions based on these Quranic signs?

6. Utilizing **Concepts, Theories, Definitions, Axioms, Laws, Prin-**

ciples, Models, Vocabulary (Recall (*idhdhakara*)): The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are ... ? Figure out all significant ideas needed to understand and answer your question. You may need to analyze these concepts. Use a good dictionary. Inferences or conclusions are based on Quranic concepts and theories. What is the most basic concept in my question? What Quranic terms have I learned?

7. Making **Assumptions, Presuppositions, Taking for Granted** (Opinions (*zunun*)): Some important assumptions I am using in my thinking are ... ? Figure out what you are taking for granted. Watch out for self-serving or unjustified assumptions. The Quranic point of view is based on some assumptions. What assumptions is the Quran using in its reasoning? What assumptions am I using in my reasoning from the Quranic revelation?

8. Generating **Implications, Consequences** (Ponder (*tadabbur*)): Evaluate options. Take into account the advantages and disadvantages of possible decisions before acting? What consequences are likely to follow from this or that decision? The Quranic assumptions and my assumptions lead to implications and consequences. What are the implications of the Quranic reasoning? What are the implications of my reasoning? Am I correct in understanding the Quranic implications?

THE SEVEN QURANIC MORAL TRAITS

1. BELIEF IN ONE GOD (TAWHID)
2. GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (TAQWA)
3. VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE (MORALLY OBLIGATED: QANATA, GOODNESS, BIRR)
4. EMPOWERING CONSTANCY, COURAGE (AZM)
5. PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS (STEADFAST: SABARA)
6. EMPATHIC ALTRUISM (LOVE, MERCY, COMPASSION: HUBB)
7. FAIRNESS (NOT SELF-SERVING OR EGO-CENTRIC: 'AQSATA)

*****

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

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Whereas Drs. Paul and Elder may not have used their work in religious educational settings, due to the separation of church and state in the educating of American students, learning from their works it became clear that their teachings can help Muslim students, as well, if their method is presented through the content of the Quran. If Muslim students come to understand that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking, that is, discernment (furqan), HOW to think, they will be armed with the intellectual skills they need to confront Islamic extremism.

One of the main scholars that Islamic extremists use in their propaganda is Seyyed Qutb. In order to further arm Muslim students for any confrontation they may have with Islamic extremists who would quote that their ideas come from Seyyed Qutb, I have used his Quranic commentary, In the Shade of the Quran, in Chapter I of this work. Students will learn how, contrary to what they may be told or taught, in many cases, Seyyed Qutb's commentary (indicated by °) speaks of and describes the way that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking and Islamic extremists cannot say that I have left out their scholars.

Last, but certainly not least, I wish to thank Kazi Publications and its founder, Liaquat Ali, for his constant support and encouragement to forge new areas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqli*) will be passed to young students as they learn of a Muslim world deeply entrenched in Islamic narrative sciences (*al-naqli*).

INTRODUCTION
READING THE SIGNS: A QURANIC PERSPECTIVE ON THINKING
BY MOHAMMAD HASHIM KAMALI

The Islamic notion of *aql* (intellect) embraces the faith dimension of knowledge that is also informed by ethical values. The prevailing reading of the Quran on rationality consists of a coalition of faith and reason which is also cognizant of the metaphysical aspect of reality and the limits, therefore, of human reason. This may be said to be a dividing line between the Islamic and Western conceptions of rationality, especially in its post-Enlightenment context.

Thus, it is not accurate to draw a direct parallel between them, as was the case in the Islamic discourse of the colonial period wherein many Muslim writers greatly admired the Western conception of rationality. The twentieth century Islamic discourse has shown awareness of that difference as it began to comprehend the subtleties inherent in the Western lexicon on rationality and its cultural overtones.[1]

THE DIVINE SIGNS (*AYAT*)

The Quran teaches an essential doctrine of the *ayat* (God's signs in the universe) functioning as pointers to the providential purpose at all levels of creation. Thus the Quran makes frequent references such as 'signs for a people who understand—exercise their intellect'. This evidential role of the divine signs entails an accompanying demand placed upon humans to engage in a rational understanding of the signs and draw conclusions on the discovery of truth and correct guidance.

The human reception of the signs, thus, depends ultimately upon the integrity of reason, without which humans would be incapable neither of comprehending the signs nor of responding to their message. The more abundant is an individual's native endowment of reason, the greater is the possibility for him or her to attain a larger magnitude of understanding and a higher level of response.

The nexus between faith and reason thus constitutes the hallmark of intelligent Islamic spirituality, wherein human intellect and emotions are guided toward harmony with one another. The Quran repeatedly provokes its reciters to think about the signs of God in the universe and within themselves, to understand God's illustrious presence in them, and ultimately to vindicate the truth. The word *ayah* and its plural *ayat* occur in the Quran over 400 times, although the whole of the Quran introduces itself as a collection of *ayat*. To quote the Quran: *We will cause them to see Our signs on the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is The Truth.* (41:53)

And, *On the earth are signs, for the ones that are certain and in yourselves. Will you not, then, perceive?* (51:20-51:21)

God reveals the truth in a variety of ways, some explicit and others by allusion, the latter mainly through the modality of the signs, in order to provoke and engage the human intellect. The signs of God cannot be readjust off the face of the signs but require thinking and reflection. This is indicated in the phrase: *We will cause them to see Our signs* ... which suggests that the signs may not be instantaneously visible to the naked eye. The whole concept of signs seeks to forge a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* (38:29) A sign is also a portent and allusion to something other than itself and should not therefore be seen as the final message and purpose of the revelation containing it.

Approximately 750 verses, or nearly one-eighth of the Quran, exhort the readers to study nature, history, the Quran itself, and humanity at large. The text of the Quran employs a range of expressions in its appeal to those who listen (*yasma'un*), those who think (*yatafakkarun*), those who reflect (*yatadabbarun*), those who observe (*yanzurun*), those who exercise their intellect (*ya'qilun*), those who take heed and remember (*yatadhakkarun*), those who ask questions (*yas'alun*), those who develop an insight (*yatafaqqahun*), and those who know (*ya'lamun*).[2]

These and their derivatives (mostly occurring in the active verbal form) consist essentially of open invocations and encouragement to thinking that is not limited by a methodology or framework. *Meditate they not, then, on the Quran* (*afala yatadabbarun al-Qur'an*) (47:24) *Tadabbur* means concentrated and goal-oriented thinking provoked by the challenge to find something new or to solve a difficult problem.

Quranic references to thinking and the exercise of intellect occur in conjunction with basically five major themes: Belief in the Oneness and generosity of God (*tawhid*); reflection on the Quran; the human being and the universe; historical precedent; and thinking itself.

References to *aql* (intellect) and its derivatives occur on 49 occasions in the text. The typical Quranic expression, *ulu'l-albab* (those who possess vision and understanding), and its synonym, *ulu'l-nuha* (people endowed with intellectual abilities) occur 33 times in the text. Such expressions are frequently juxtaposed with the exposition of signs, such as in the sign: *Thus, God makes manifest His signs to you so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (2:242) or in the sign: *Surely, We made manifest the signs to you so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (57:17). Repeated references to pondering over the signs are variously nuanced such that they embrace within their fold the widest spectrum of people who may be endowed with different intellectual abilities and endowments.[3]

Al-Isfahani defines thought (*al-fikr*) as the power of the mind that facil-

itates access to knowledge (*'ilm*). Thinking (*al-tafakkur*) is the movement of that power which is driven by the intellect (*al-'aql*), and this can only occur when an initial image of the subject is attainable in the mind of the thinker. Thinking cannot, therefore, proceed over something of which no image exists in the mind. This can be said of the self of God, for example, as we have no image on which to focus our thought.[4]

The human being can only think over the attributes of God through the observation of His signs. Broadly speaking, thinking proceeds over the whole of the created universe without any exception; indeed, the Quran repeatedly invites such in respect to both the physical and abstract aspects of reality, both in the present and in regards to bygone history that is only perceived by the intellect rather than sense perception. Often the Quran gives examples, parables, and narratives of other nations, and then follows them with the reminder, usually addressed to the Prophet, to recount the narratives of the past so that the people may think and reflect over them:

And recount to them the tiding of him to whom We gave Our signs. (7:175)

And there are the parables that We propound for humanity so that perhaps they will reflect. (59:21)

Truly, in that are certainly signs for a folk who reflect. (30:21)

A hierarchy of five perceptive-cognitive functions is also suggested, including and extending through hearing, sight, thinking, dhikr remembrance, and certainty.[5]

Given such a scale of intensified perceptive understanding, the Quran propounds the notion of *ulul'l-albab*, the thoughtful individuals who are possessed of proper understanding and response. *'Aql* is thus tied to the cognitive dimension of faith.

Significantly, the very term for reason and intelligence in Arabic, *al-'aql*, has at the core of its basic meaning the practical idea of "restraining" and "binding," that is, of holding one's self back from blameworthy conduct—being an interior self-imposed limit. Quranic commentators understand thinking (*tafakkur, tafkir*) as pondering and reflection, which is a mental activity and process, not an outcome.

Thinking (*tafakkur*) is considered as a form of worship of God if it is done with sincerity and good purpose. *'Aql* in its Quranic conception is also one that conceives the truth, and it is always in search of it. This conception of *'aql* precludes one that is rigid, arrogant, and misleading. Some have also drawn the conclusion from the ubiquitous Quranic emphasis on thinking that all Muslims must strive to be thinking individuals.[6]

Al-Qaradawi has quoted Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's (d. 751/1350) own observation as well as some epithetic statements, the latter narrated from other leading figures to the effect that "thinking for an hour is better than worship of many years," and another statement that "thinking for an hour is superior to a whole night of prayer." To this Ibn Qayyim added that "thinking is the

act of the heart whereas worship is the act of one's limbs, and the former is superior to the latter."

The pious caliph Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz (d. 101/718) is similarly quoted: Thinking over the bounties of God is the best form of worship. Abbas Mahmud al-Agqad went so far as to say that: Thinking—*al-tafkir*—is an Islamic obligation. Just as God Most High ordered us to worship Him by performing prayer and fasting, He also ordered us to think in numerous verses and in so many different ways, all of which vindicate thinking as one of the cardinal messages of the Quran.[7]

The Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge espoused with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression *al-tafaqquh fi'l-din*, that is, understands the religion, signifying a rational and inquisitive approach to constructing a Quranic worldview.

Islam, in other words, advises analytical knowledge and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely dogmatic approach. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions: Faith based on detailed analysis (*al-iman al-tafsili*) as opposed to undigested and uncomprehended faith (*al-iman al-ijmali*). The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the religious scholars of all the leading schools of thought. Thus it is declared in a sign: *But a section of people only that they become learned in the way of life and that they warn their folk.* (9:122).

We also note the distinction between thought-based knowledge and transmitted or received knowledge reflected in the twin juristic and hadith-related expressions of knowledge based on understanding (*'ilm al-diraya*), and report-based and transmitted knowledge (*'ilm al-riwaya*). The former is based on understanding and insight (*diraya wa tafaqquh*) and takes priority over the latter. Whereas *'ilm al-riwaya* relies mainly on memory and retention, *'ilm al-diraya* is based on cognition, understanding, and analysis.

Thus, if there are hadith reports, or any factual reports for that matter, which do not stand to reason and understanding, they would be most likely discounted and abandoned, with the exception only of devotional matters (*'ibadat*) which are based on faith and submission more than on rational analysis.

Another feature of the Quranic vision of thinking is indicated in its emphasis on wisdom and good judgment (*hikmah*) which signifies the quality of thinking, its regard for values, and its outcome. Wisdom and good judgment can easily be said to be more important than technical know-how and expertise, as it can guide expert knowledge as to its proper application and the attainment of excellence.

The Quran mentions *hikmah* twenty times, and in about ten of these it is

immediately preceded by the word Book or *kitab*, which is a reference to divine scripture—primarily the Quran, but also other divinely revealed scriptures. The text, thus, says with reference to Jesus: *And He teaches him the Book and wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel.* (3:48) The juxtaposition of *kitab* and *hikmah* is often contextualized by a reference to the sending of prophets who teach the people and guide them with scripture and wisdom (e.g., *wa yu'allimuhum al-kitaba wa'l-hikmata*) as it is said of the Prophet Muhammad: *And teaches you the Book and wisdom* (2:159) and: *Teaches them the Book and wisdom* (62:2 ff); the descendants of Prophet Abraham: *We gave the people of Abraham the Book and wisdom* (4:54); and of Luqman: *We gave Luqman wisdom* (31:12). The holistic, superior, and indivisible value of *hikmah* in the Quran is underscored in one of its signs to the effect that when God bestows wisdom on someone that person is indeed granted an immense source of goodness: *And whomever is given wisdom, then, surely, was given much good and none recollects no doubt but those imbued with intuition.* (2:269).

To mention *hikmah* together with the Book evidently means that the Quran should be read with wisdom and divorcing the one from the other by taking a totally dogmatic approach to the Quran goes against the divine purpose and intention of its revelation. To read the Quran in the light of *hikmah* thus means a comprehensive reading that reaches beyond the obvious meaning of its words to encapsulate the goal and purpose of its message and then also reflection on the ways and means of how its benefits can be realized for the individual and society.[8]

The repeated juxtaposition of the "Book and *Hikmah*" in the Quran led some commentators, such as the Successor, Qatadah ibn Diama al-Sadusi (d.118 H), Ibn Wahhab, the disciple of Imam Malik (d. 179/795), and the Imam al-Shafii (d. 205/820) himself to the somewhat unusual observation that "*hikmah*" is a reference to the Sunna of the Prophet. Many have taken and followed this view; but since the text does not specify such a meaning for *hikmah*, the word should convey its natural and unqualified meaning as I have depicted in this presentation.

Good judgment, insight, balance and avoidance of extremes, the ability to distinguish between truth and falsehood, and procedural accuracy are commonly associated with *hikmah* and *hikmah* as such becomes a dimension of evaluative thinking in. its Quranic idiom. Besides, when the Quran declares that God Most High endowed the Prophets David and Solomon and also the renowned sage Luqman with *hikmah*, it could not have referred to the Sunna of the Prophet Muhammad, as Sunna as such did not exist in those times.

The Quranic usage of *hikmah* reinforces the holistic quality of thinking. *Hikmah* also seeks to forge a close tie between reason and emotion (*'aql wa qalb*) thereby encouraging what is now known as emotional intelligence. This is how the Quran and also the Sunna often deliver their messages, for, unlike

the modern statutory laws and texts, the Quranic guidance, commands, and prohibitions are often espoused with appeals to the heart and mind of their readers.[9]

Al-Isfahani defined *hikmah* as the realization of the truth through knowledge and intellect and it is manifested in the performance of benevolent deeds.[10] According to another definition: Wisdom signifies comprehension of the truth and reality and the ability to avoid corruption in one's quest to attain perfection."[11]

Random House Dictionary of the English Language similarly defines wisdom as: Knowledge of what is true or right coupled with just judgment as to action. Wisdom is thinking informed by the light of the heart that often leads to action and contemplates its consequences in relationship with other relevant factors. This may strike a note with the renowned hadith in which it is declared that: Fearing God is the pinnacle of wisdom (*ra's al-hikmati makhafat Allah*)."[12]

It is presumably for this reason that the great religions of the world have urged the seekers of knowledge to combine it with wisdom. It is wisdom that confers a higher quality on thinking and helps knowledge to be used for the promotion of good giving it meaning and direction.

In an effort to train the individual to enhance his or her quality of thinking, al-Ghazali (d. 505/1111) discusses the two sources of knowledge that Muslim tradition has recognized. One of these is through human teaching and learning (*al-ta'allum al-insani*) and the other through divine teaching (*al-ta'lim al-rabbani*).

The former is externally transmitted from teacher to student, whereas the latter is conveyed by the Universal Intellect which is superior, more intense, and more effective than human teaching. This knowledge is internally acquired either through revelation (*wahy*), which is a prerogative of the Prophets, or it is acquired through meditation, thinking, and reflection.

Al-Ghazali subscribes to the view that the essence of all knowledge is centered in the inner self of the human person in much the same way as growth potential that is vested in the soil and seed, and it is through teaching that the individual's potential is developed.[13] These two aspects of knowledge, that is, the external and the internal, are complementary to one another. This is because no one can possibly teach or learn from any teacher all the sciences, some of which are learned through teaching but the rest inferred by the reflective thought of the individual. It is therefore important that the avenues of learning remain open both through teaching and through inner reflection, thinking, and illumination. This is another way of saying that all knowledge is acquired and developed through the senses, inner reflection and thinking, both of which partake in natural endowment and development through external transmission and teaching.

Al-Ghazali's views on the internal and external sources of knowledge

tended to correspond with those of Ibn Sina (d. 428/1037), but which differed, at least partially, from those of the second/ninth century Ikhwan al-Safa (c. 373/983). All knowledge, according to the latter, is acquired through the senses and none inheres in human nature. Knowledge that is developed through thought and reflection also originate in the senses. The same analysis is extended to the axiomatic knowledge of postulates that are derived and confirmed through the senses. In support of this theory Ikhwan al-Safa have cited the Quranic verse: *And God brought you out from the wombs of your mothers and you know nothing.* (16:78). All knowledge is therefore acquired knowledge, a view which may strike a closer note with some of the modern theories on the subject.[14]

Muslim thought in the middle ages did not admit the ontological distinction between tangible entities that could be sensuously apprehended and entities of a spiritual or subliminal nature. This may be said to be a more sound and realistic view of reality than is allowed for by the modern positivist doctrines of science. Being is manifested at various levels and in several forms, none of which is less real than the other. Arabic thought employed the notions systematized in Stoic theory that divide being into three locations: Verbal utterance, psychic representation, and reality—without this last in any sense having exclusive title to Being.

Al-Farabi (d. 950 CE) took up this view and assimilated psychic representation to the entities of reason. Others rehearsed this division with the addition of a fourth location, that of Scripture. Reality thus had a four-fold manifestation, depending on whether the subject existed immediately in itself or whether its like was graven in the mind (*dhihn*, psyche) composed of sounds, which together indicates the psychic representation, or was manifested in characters standing for sound and speech. All four have a basic characteristic in common which is existence (*wujud, haqiqah*).[15]

The Islamic and Western perceptions of creative and evaluative thinking both recognize this to be a skill that is developed through training and controlled exercise. It is through training and thinking that we adopt new patterns of perceiving reality that we are able to see differently and creatively. It is generally acceded that creative thinking and critical thinking go hand-in-hand and complement one another. Critical thinking means "involving or exercising skilled judgment or observation." Thinking is critical when it evaluates the reasoning behind a decision. Such evaluation must, however, be carried forth in a constructive manner.[16]

The purpose of critical thinking is to achieve understanding, evaluate viewpoints, and solve problems. In general, one's thinking is likely to become critical when concrete learning experiences precede abstract thought.[17] This strikes a parallel note, in its Islamic idiom, with thinking that is espoused with *hikmah*.

The famous yet controverted hadith: The first (being) God created is the

intelligence (*awwalu ma khalaqa Allahu al-'aqla*), sparked prolonged discussions among Muslim thinkers over many centuries over the implications of this statement. Among the issues debated was the priority of reason over revelation and the respective role of each in their mutual inter-dependence.

Another issue was whether the disparity among humans in respect of reason also affected the modalities of moral obligation. Some prominent thinkers including Abu Bakr al-Razi (d. 313/925) apparently advocated the primacy of reason over the revelation. This would be properly known as "rationalism," which deems the primacy of reason over revelation. This is different from "rationality" which means treating any issue by using reason without giving reason priority.

SOURCES AND INSTRUMENTS OF KNOWLEDGE

Commenting on the Quranic passage quoted earlier, Muhammad Iqbal observed that the Quran regards both self (*anfus*) and world (*afaq*) as sources of knowledge. God reveals His signs in inner as well as outer experience. The Quran thus opens fresh vistas of knowledge in the domain of our inner experience. Mystic experience and intuition, then, however unusual and abnormal, must now be regarded as perfectly natural and open to scrutiny like other aspects of human experience." But inner experience is only one source of human knowledge. The outer experience in the Quran, Iqbal continues on the same page, unfolds two other sources of knowledge—nature and history, and it is in tapping these sources of knowledge that "the spirit of Islam is seen at its best".

The Quran sees the signs of reality in the sun, the moon, the alternation of day and night, the perpetual changes of the winds, the variety of human colors and tongues, and in fact in the whole of nature as revealed to the sense-perception of man. The Muslim's duty is to reflect on these signs and not to pass by them as if he is deaf and blind *They have hearts with which they understand not. And they have eyes with which they perceive not. And they have ears with which they hear not. Those are like flocks. Nay! They are ones who go astray. Those, they are the ones who are heedless* (7:179), for he who does not see these signs in this life will remain blind to the realities of the life to come. The divine signs are observed through sense-perception using mainly the faculties of hearing, sight, and intellect: *Journey they not through the earth? Have they not hearts with which to be reasonable or ears with which to hear?* (22:46) The emphasis in this sign is on the faculty of reason and understanding, suggesting that not all of our information about nature comes directly from sensation, for if that were the case we would be no different from animals.

Frequent references to sense-perception as the principal mode of receiving the signs show the scientific/experimental import of the Quran. The Quran goes even further to suggest sense perception as the only avenue of knowl-

edge, as the text already reviewed provides: *And God brought you out from the wombs of your mothers and you know nothing. And He assigned to you the ability to hear and sight and mind so that perhaps you will give thanks.* (16:78) Knowledge of the signs is therefore acquired through the use of these faculties. In another sign, the Quran praises those who listen to the word and follow the best of it: *Those who listen to the saying of the Quran and follow the fairer of it. Those are those whom God guided. And those, they are imbued with intuition.* (or make the best possible interpretation thereof) (39:18). This sign apparently subjects the data of sense-perception to the exercise of intellectual selection. The text also teaches that sense-perception does not perceive all reality: *So I swear an oath by what you perceive and what you perceive not.* (69:37-69:38). Certainty (*yaqin*) may also be beyond the reach of human intellect, as the human mind may be blurred by the variables of time and space. What is deemed certain today may be uncertain tomorrow.

We also note that according to the teachings of the Quran, the universe is dynamic in its origin, finite, and capable of increase. Early Muslim thinkers do not seem to have grasped the Quranic emphasis on inductive reasoning and experimentation. It was indeed a slow realization for Muslim thinkers to note "that the spirit of the Quran was essentially anti-classical". Putting full confidence in Greek reasoning, Muslim thinkers tried to understand the Quran in the light of Greek philosophy, which in the beginning of their careers they had studied with so much enthusiasm.

The substance of Iqbal's analysis on this subject is also upheld by Malik bin Nabi (1905-1973), who understands the creative impulse of the Quran as the motivating force behind the efflorescence of science at a time when Muslim thinkers began to grasp the full impact of the Quran on experimentation and inductive reasoning.[18]

The dynamic conception of the universe in the Quran is also seen by its conception of life as an evolutionary movement in time. History thus constitutes the third source of knowledge in the Quran. It is one of the most essential teachings of the Quran, as Iqbal has further observed, that nations are collectively judged, and suffer for their misdeeds here and now. The Quran thus constantly cites historical instances, and urges upon the reader to reflect on the past and present experiences of humanity: *Customs passed away before you. So journey through the earth; then, look on how had been the Ultimate End of the ones who deny.* (3:137)

If a wound afflicts you, surely, a wound afflicted the folk similar to that. And these are the days We rotate among humanity so that God knows those who believed and takes witnesses to Himself from among you. (3:140)

And: *And of whom We created there is a community that guides with The Truth, and with it, it is just. And those who denied Our signs, We will draw them on gradually from where they will not know.* (7:181-183)

The Quran's interest in history as a source of human knowledge extends

farther than mere indication of historical generalizations. "It has given us one of the most fundamental principles of historical criticism."[19] Since accuracy in recording facts is an indispensable condition of history as a science, accuracy depends ultimately on those who report them. The reporter's personal character is thus an important factor in judging his testimony. The Quran says *O those who believed! If one who disobeys drew near to you with a tiding, then, be clear so that you not light on a folk out of ignorance.* (49:6). It is the application of the principle embodied in this sign to the reporters of the Prophet's traditions out of which were gradually evolved the canons of historical criticism.

A scientific treatment of history, however, requires a wider experience, a greater maturity of practical reason, and a fuller realization of certain basic ideas regarding the nature of life and time. These are in the main three, and taken together they constitute the foundation of Quranic teaching.

(1) The unity of human origin: The Quran states: *He creates you from one soul.* (39:6) And: *O humanity! Be God-conscious of your Lord Who created you from a single soul.* (4:1). But the perception of life as an organic unity is a slow achievement. Islam sowed the germ of this aspiration and it became a Quranic assignment of us to work towards its realization. Notwithstanding the fact that Christianity, long before Islam, brought the message of equality to humanity, the Roman Empire had no more than a general and abstract conception of human unity.

On the other hand, the growth of territorial nationalism in Europe has tended to stifle the broad human element in the art and literature of Europe. European colonialism was also inspired by a self-image of superiority. Europe assumed a superior image that non-European peoples could be freely dominated, exploited, and subjugated.[20] It was quite otherwise with Islam. The impulse of Islam was from the outset to make the idea of human unity a living factor in the Muslim experience that was to be taken towards fuller fruition.

(2) A keen sense of the reality of time, and the concept of life as a continuous movement in time: The Quranic view of the alternation of day and night as a sign of the ultimate Reality which appears in a fresh glory every moment and the tendency in Muslim metaphysics to regard time as objective—all this constituted the intellectual heritage and ideals of Islam.

(3) The merger between religious and secular values: This is a unique feature of Islamic thought which is distinguished by its attempt to bring harmony between them, probably for the first time in history. It was in the state of Madinah that we encounter a clear example where universally proclaimed moral values formed the criteria of political judgment. Political leaders and statesmen were expected to recognize not only the value of efficiency, but also of justice, human dignity, equality, and freedom. In his renowned *Philosophy of History*, Hegel (1770-1831) recognized that the unity between the secular and the spiritual took place in Islamic society and civilization long be-

fore it made any impact in the modern West: We must therefore regard (the reconciliation between the secular and spiritual) as commencing rather in the enormous contrast between the spiritual religious principles, and the barbarian Real World. For spirit as the consciousness of an inner world is, at the commencement, itself still in the abstract form. All that is secular is consequently given over to rudeness and capricious violence. The (Muslim) principle, the enlightenment of the oriental world, is the first to contravene this barbarism and caprice. We find it developing itself later and more rapidly than Christianity; for the latter needed eight centuries to grow into a political form.[21]

The modern West followed the example of the historical Islamic world in demanding that holders of political power operate under a set of moral rules. But as the modern West harmonized the secular and religious only nationally, the international realm was free to operate under the dynamics of power politics and secular rudeness. This failure was a cause of the senseless violence that claimed over 100 million war victims in the twentieth century. Recognition of the danger of the purely secular politics led to the creation of the United Nations, yet even this effort was undermined by political realists who enjoyed a disproportionate sway among the political pundits of Europe and America.

Safi has rightly noted the irony that contemporary Muslim societies have unfortunately followed a similar course in decoupling the secular and the religious and now find themselves entangled in a crisis of legitimacy. Many Muslim regimes are driven by the logic of power and operate outside the realm of moral correctness. It is alarming to see that this decoupling has impacted the religiously inspired movements, which seem to succumb to the logic of power in their readiness to employ amoral--even immoral--strategies in their fight against political corruption and oppression.[22]

OBSTACLES TO CORRECT REASONING

The Quranic emphasis on pondering over the signs is also underscored by a set of guidelines to ensure a correct outcome of reflection and thinking over them. The text thus draws attention to a series of exclusions and factors that stand in the way of the proper functioning of intellect:

(1) Pursuit of caprice (*hawa*) which may consist of love, hatred, pomposity and prejudice that confound impartiality and sound judgment: *Had you considered he who took to himself his own desire as his god and whom God caused to go astray out of a knowledge, sealed over his having the ability to hear and his heart and laid a blindfold on his sight? Who, then, will guide him after God? Will you not, then, recollect?* (45:23)

And if you had followed their desires after what drew near you of the knowledge, there is not for you from God either a protector or a helper. (2:120)

But if they respond not to you, then, know that they only follow their own desires. (28:50)

And: *And obey not him whose heart We made neglectful of Our Remem-*

brance and who followed his own desires and whose affair had been excess. (18:28)

The choice is between two alternatives: caprice (*hawa*) and guidance (*huda*); the former evidently renders obscure one's attempt to attain the latter.

(2) Pursuit of conjecture in the face of certitude: And surely conjecture (*al-zann*) avails nothing against the truth (*al-Haqq*). *And most of them follow nothing but opinion. Truly, opinion avails them not against The Truth at all.* (10:36)

And follow up not of what there is not for you knowledge of it. Truly, having the ability to hear and sight and mind, each of those will have been that which is asked. (17:36) Knowledge and truth stand in contradistinction with the pursuit of conjecture. Note that the text says one should not follow conjecture until it is established and elevated to the rank of knowledge. It does not say that one should avoid conjecture altogether. In another place, conjecture occurs side by side with *hawa* or that which they themselves desire: *They follow nothing but opinion and that for which their souls yearn.* (53:23) This is the kind of conjecture or opinion that is meant.

Knowledge is established by sense-perception that often begins with a measure of speculation and doubt but which is affirmed by the light of reason and conviction. Some commentators maintain that the main context for this guideline is religion: Thus it is said that one should not take speculative positions in matters of belief. As for scientific enquiry and pursuit of knowledge, conjecture is neither discouraged nor avoidable.[23]

The ultimate purpose of this engagement is to attain the truth. Once the truth is attained, one should then commit oneself to it and observe it: *And what else is there after The Truth but wandering astray. Where, then, turn you away?* (10:32)

Completed was the Word of your Lord in sincerity and justice. There is no one who changes His Words. (54) (6:115).

(3) Blind imitation of others: The correct exercise of reason in Islam is tied to personal conviction as opposed to indiscriminate following of others, hallowed custom, and precedent. These must be judged in the light of reason and abandoned if found deviant and misleading: The misguided will say, as the Quran provides: *Nay! We will follow whatever we discovered our fathers were following on it —even though their fathers had been not at all reasonable—nor are they truly guided.* (2:170)

And: *Enough is what we found our fathers upon. Even though their fathers had been knowing nothing nor are they truly guided?* (5:104)

This was the response that Prophet Abraham and other great prophets received from their detractors, but the text address them again and again that both you and your ancestors were clearly misguided. *Certainly, We gave Abraham his right judgment before. And We had been ones who know of him when he said to his father and his folk: What are these images to which you be ones*

who give yourselves up to? They said: We found our fathers as ones who are worshippers of them. He said: Certainly, you and your fathers had been in a clear wandering astray.(21:51-21:54)

Forsake those who took to themselves their way of life as a pastime and as a diversion and whom this present life deluded. (6:70)

Is it that your formal prayer commands you that we leave what our fathers worship? (11:87)

As we shall presently elaborate, indiscriminate imitation of others is widely held to be the single most damaging cause of the decline of creative thinking among Muslims.

(4) Oppressive Dictatorship: The Quran takes to task arrogant dictators and those who support them and follow them. Hence the plea of those who say: *Our Lord! Truly, we obeyed our chiefs and our great ones. They caused us to go astray from the way* (33:66) should be of no merit. In a number of other places the text denounces the Pharaoh and Karun for their oppressive ways who misled their people in rejecting the guidance that was conveyed to them. *Pharaoh and his Council but they followed the command of Pharaoh. And the command of Pharaoh was not well-intended.* (11:96)

DECLINE OF CRITICAL THINKING

I shall not retrace well-documented history that Muslim thinkers were pioneers in the creation of new knowledge. It was due to the impact of the Quran that, in contrast to the Greeks who excelled in deductive method of reasoning and logic, Muslim scientists distinguished themselves in inductive and experimental approaches to scientific enquiry. The golden period of Muslim science started around 700 AD and lasted until about 1350 AD. Great thinkers such as Ibn Sina, Jabir ibn Hayyan, Abu Bakr Zakarriya al-Razi, Abu Rayhan al-Biruni, Ibn al-Nafis al-Dimashgi, al-Khawarizmi, and many others have left a rich legacy of contributions to the advancement of sciences in anatomy, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, optics, etc.[24]

After the fourteenth century creative thinking began to decline in the Islamic world due to a variety of factors, including the Mongol invasion and burning of Baghdad, the defeat of the Muslim Arabs in Spain and the continuing crusades, the collapse of the Ottoman caliphate, and the ensuing onslaught of European colonialism. The creative impulse of Islamic thought suffered setbacks as a result. Muslims were also beset with many internal problems including the alienation of philosophers, scientists, and thinkers from the theologians, sectarian controversies, and the prevalence of intellectual conservatism and imitation of past authority (*taqlid*)).

Philosophy and the sciences fell into a rapid decline while more rigid forms of instruction and narrower curricula prevailed. It was argued that orthodoxy was being threatened and that there was a need to restrain thinkers in order to defend religion. The latitude and diversity of discourse that expanded

the scope of religious sciences, theology (*kalam*), commentary (*tafsir*), hadith, and jurisprudence (*fiqh*) gave way to narrower criteria of *kufr*, *bidah*, and *taqlid* and the so-called closing of the door of *ijtihad* (*sadd bab al-ijtihad*).[25]

More recently, a certain abuse of Islamic authority operated by a dogmatic radicalism has exacerbated the decline of creative thought among Muslims. The situation is not helped by the prevalence of passivity in popular culture concerning the dogmatic excesses of these ardent proponents of imitation of past authority (*taqlid*). One of the salient features of this mindset is a certain ignorance of the essential impulse of the Quran on creative thought. Malik bin Nabi put it succinctly that the crisis of a civilization and a society at a critical point of its history "is not the paucity of its material objects but the poverty of its ideas."[26]

WHAT IS *IJTIHAD*?

The Quranic appeal to rational thinking and enquiry is not restrained by the methodology of *ijtihad*. There is, in fact, no clear text on *ijtihad*[27] in the Quran. *Ijtihad* as a concept originates in the hadith of the Prophet and the practice and precedent of companions. The methodology of *ijtihad* which is the basic theme of the science of the sources of law (i.e. *usul al-fiqh*) is itself a product of *ijtihad*. It seems that the Prophet also saw *ijtihad* as a creative impulse rather than engaging in the technicalities of legal reasoning—as the *usul al-fiqh* later developed in abundance. When the Prophet spoke of *ijtihad* or when he approved of its application, he seems to have done so in terms of *ijtihad* qua creative thinking.

One would readily admit that imposing restrictions on thinking, even if it were possible, by cultures and legal traditions could be exaggerated, in which case it would be prone to acquiring negative dimensions. One would not, on the other hand, advocate free thinking that is not limited by some kind of goal-orientation and values. Even the actual process of creative thinking, as earlier noted, is a skill that could be learned and refined by stages to direct it into productive avenues. The liberal tradition of the West tends to impose minimal restrictions on thinking whereas Islam tends to take a more guided approach to creative reasoning. Whereas both the Islamic and Western traditions recognize the authority of reason as a criterion of judgment, the liberal tradition has, unlike Islam, isolated spirituality and faith from the ambit of scientific rationality.

However, the methodology of *ijtihad* was also influenced in the course of time by a variety of factors, including the political climate, the change of caliphate (*khilafah*) to monarchy (*mulk*), Hellenistic thought in relationship to analogy (*qiyas*) and its syllogistic components, and the rift between the religious scholars and ruling authorities.[28]

Usul al-fiqh and its proposed methodology followed a difficult course and became embroiled in technicality that had adverse consequences for *ijti-*

had. What is needed now is to recapture the purity of this vital concept, to make *ijtihad* as our principal instrument for originality and healthy adjustment, but also to revise and reform some aspects of the theory of *ijtihad* itself that are no longer responsive to the prevailing conditions and challenges of our time.

I have elsewhere discussed the theory of *ijtihad* and its related issues and space here does not permit engagement in detail.[29] Yet I conclude this section by suggesting, however briefly, that the conventional theory of *ijtihad* needs to be revised and reformed in respect of the need:

1) to recognize the validity of collective and consultative *ijtihad* (*ijtihad jama'i*) side by side with that of *ijtihad* by individual scholars;

2) to allow experts in other fields such as science, economics, and medicine to carry out *ijtihad* in their respective fields if they are equipped with adequate knowledge of the source evidence of Islam. They may alternatively sit together with, or seek advice from, those learned in *Shariah.*

Ijtihad has in the past been often used as an instrument of diversity and disagreement rather than of unity and consensus. Although disagreement must admittedly be allowed in principle, yet there is a greater need today for unity and consensus. Scholars and learned bodies should not perhaps encourage excessive engagement in diversity of schools and sects but try to find ways that would help to close the gap between them and encourage unity on principles. This may require policy guidelines for different settings and countries, and, if so, that should be reflected in our approaches to *ijtihad.* Certain guidelines may also be provided by thinkers and leaders to stimulate consensus-oriented *ijtihad* within the ranks of the judiciary and legislative assemblies.

Ijtihad has in the past been conceived basically as a legal concept and methodology. Our understanding of the source evidence on *ijtihad* does not specify such a framework for *ijtihad.* Rather, we think of the original conception of *ijtihad* as a problem-solving formula for the problems encountered by individual Muslims and the Muslim community. This would confirm our view of the need to broaden the scope of *ijtihad* to other disciplines beyond the framework of *fiqh* and *usul al-fiqh.*

According to a legal maxim of Islamic jurisprudence, there should be no *ijtihad* in the presence of a clear text of the Quran and Hadith (*la ijtihad ma'al-nass*). This maxim should also be revised. This is because of the possibility that the text in question could now be seen in a different light and given a fresh interpretation in a different context. What we are saying is that the legal text may need to be understood first and that by itself may involve *ijtihad.* Hence *ijtihad* may not be precluded if it could advance a fresh understanding of the text in the first place.

The persistent decline of critical reason among Muslims is due partly to the notion that the exercise of personal judgment and *ijtihad* ceased with the epoch-making works of the legists and imams of the past. Added to this is the

prevailing mindset that a Muslim should follow one or the other of the established schools of thought and abandon his judgment in favor of interpretations of the earlier centuries whose originators could have no conception of the necessities of the twenty-first century Muslims. Until about 1500 CE, independent *ijtihad* allowed Muslims and Muslim societies to continually adapt in the face of changing societal conditions and new advances in knowledge.

Unfortunately, as Muslim civilization began to weaken about four centuries ago in the face of Western advances, Muslims began to adopt a more conservative stance in an attempt to preserve traditional values and institutions. As a result Muslim thinkers became inclined to view innovation and adaptation negatively. For all the rhetoric and symbolic form of the neo-radicals that tend to dominate the audience of Muslims, the spirit of Islam is often palpably missing from their endeavors, while more than ever *ijtihad* is needed where women, education, and politics are concerned.

ISLAM AND THE WEST

Scientific rationality essentially reduces intelligence to the level of neural chemistry where mental and behavioral phenomena are understood merely as manifestations of physical processes. It tends to deprive us of our noblest dimensions (faith, love, beauty), separates the soul from the body, and the sensory from the intelligible. In the realm of economics, we are merely a producer and consumer of goods and is moved solely by our individual self-interest. This too is opposed to the Islamic viewpoint which also sees in us morality and transcendent faith.

This physicalist analysis of intelligence is now increasingly being seen as conceptually inadequate. The real question is whether one may admit a human dimension which is autonomous and irreducible to a physical mass. In Moravia's phrase "can one posit something which exists and yet at the same time is non physical? Do the rejection of the soul and the achievements attained by bio and neurosciences oblige us to hold that man is nothing but body?"[30] Recently these have been attempted by some creative thinkers to reconceptualize intentions of 'reason' and 'intelligence' along anti-materialistic lines drawing on the experience of older non-Western traditions, or even popular folk conceptions.[31]

Islamic philosophy—which mainly studies purposes, as against science which mainly studies causes—sees, in line with the Quranic teaching, the role of objects and events as signs of divine presence and action. Faith is understood by Muslims not as a limitation on science but as its vista for enrichment and perfection.[32]

The variant perspectives of Western philosophy and science are also behind the Western puzzlement why Muslims have not become more secularized. This unwarranted assumption has in the past led to mistaken assessments of Islam and continues to foster genuine misunderstanding concerning the real

nature of Islamic religion and intellectual traditions. For the majority of Muslims today are woefully uninformed of the depth and scope of their rich heritage on the authoritative validity of reason. Thinking Muslims should work to vindicate the symbiotic relation of faith and reason in their religion and see it as a source of enrichment and contribution of Islam to human understanding and civilization.

CONCLUSION

This essay advanced a Quranic perspective on thinking, which is affirmative in critical and goal-oriented thinking and also provides a set of guidelines that ensures its purity and purpose from negative reductionist influences. The guidelines so provided are also rich in advancing a spiritual dimension with the understanding that thinking which is not informed by morality and faith can lose its direction and purpose and can even become harmful to human welfare. From the Quranic vantage point, the sciences of nature should be key to our cognition of the signs of God in the universe. For this may be instrumental in solving individual and social problems without interrupting the cosmic order and the human habitat on earth. The blatant disregard of ethical values in science has weakened scientists' sense of responsibility and contributed to the degradation of the human condition on the globe.

Since thinking is a skill that can be advanced by self-application and training, it is amenable to guidance, bereavement, and enrichment. Universities and institutions of learning in Muslim countries are generally short of resources, and those who have the means still fall short, to their detriment, of nurturing the culture of reading and research among their students and scholars. Centers of higher learning may do well to establish a new order of relationship between the natural sciences and humanities, and between all fields of knowledge and human welfare and also the avenues of benefit to society. The present-day education system is due for a reappraisal in order to instill creative thinking and breadth of vision among students and scholars that is informed by the inter-relatedness of the various disciplines of learning. This could be done, as one observer suggested, "by adding sufficient number of courses in humanities to the science and engineering curricula, by cross-disciplinary interaction and collaboration."[33] The main characteristic of the human sciences, from the Islamic perspective, is that they are not value-free and have to be incorporated within the value system of Islam that is informed by the ethical and human dimension of values.

It is ironic to note, however, that the vast majority of Muslims are wont to rote reading of the Quran which is patently vacuous and devoid of thinking. The Quran is usually read, committed to memory, and cited for its spiritual merit rather than intellectual stimulation and enrichment. This is evidently not the advice one obtains from the Quran itself Al-Qaradawi has rightly observed about the current realities of public education in Muslim countries that "the

system relies on memorization and cramming more than it does on comprehension and analysis. A typical weakness of this method is that the memorizer forgets as soon as the exams are over. But if what is learned is founded in understanding and comprehension, its substance will remain in the mind and will not be prone to oblivion so quickly."[34]

But the issue that we raise here is well-entrenched and originates in the overall emphasis that most educationists and jurists of earlier times have placed on the study of the Quran, Hadith and *fiqh* manuals, often calling attention to words and sentences of the text at the expense of comprehension and analysis. The basic approach to Quran studies thus emphasized correct pronunciation and memorization. This repetitive system of learning was particularly pronounced in the context of child education, although it was not confined to this framework as other and more advanced levels of Islamic scholarship also bore the same influence.[35]

Notwithstanding the profound influence of the Quran on the thoughts, mores, and cultures of Muslim individuals and societies, thinking by its nature does not lend itself to any predetermined framework and guideline. It seems that the Quran also seeks only to provide signs and signposts on thinking, but the subjective and innately individual bent of thinking is often inspired by imagination and insight which cannot be encapsulated by definitions and guidelines. A creative mind is unique by its attributes, and thinking that originates in a learned and upright individual is one of the greatest gifts of creation that can itself fit the description of divine example, or sign, of God on earth.

It remains to be added though that imaginative thinking has also been sparkled by sources and influences among great Muslim thinkers of other cultures and traditions—just as we note also that the great thinkers of history emerged in all regions, cultures, and religions. The substance of these statements is upheld in a renowned Hadith in which the Prophet instructed the Muslims to "seek knowledge, even unto China," and in another Hadith that "wisdom is the lost property of the believer; he is entitled to it wherever he finds it."

Knowledge and wisdom must therefore be ultimately seen as the shared achievements of humanity, endowed and posited by its outstanding and creative thinkers. This is also known from the fact that the outcomes of creative thinking are often shared and experienced far beyond geographical locales and frontiers—more so perhaps in the age of globalization.

It is hoped that the great thinkers and leaders of humanity make it a part of their agenda and commitment to narrow down the distances and divides between the intellectual and cultural traditions of the world and aspire them to the veritable vision of a shared destiny and wider human fraternity in their deliberations.

Mohammad Hashim Kamali[36]

PREVIEW *BOOK YEAR 10*

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

The Lessons in *Book Year 1* through *Book Year 24*, including *Book Year 10* presented here, are numbered consecutively in order of the revelation of a Quranic Chapter. Here, in *Book Year 10*, we begin with Lesson 69, that is, Quran Chapter 18 which is the 69th Chapter revealed followed by Quranic Chapters 18 and, finally, Quranic Chapter 16, the 70th Chapter revealed.

The chronological order of the chapters of the Quran that follow throughout the series is based on the list accepted by al-Azhar University in Cairo[1] and is considered to be the official order. It differs greatly from the chronological order developed by Western scholars over the centuries and is much more detailed.

Quranic signs or verses (*ayat*) of each section (*ruku*) in a particular Quranic chapter are given in each lesson followed by a commentary. A short paragraph describes the Eight Elements of Reason and then a paragraph titled Example of How Quranic Critical Thinking Works. The paragraph that comes after this is for the student to determine which of the statements are one of the Eight Elements of Reasoning. Each Lesson ends with a Student Self-assessment.

We do not have a great deal of detailed information about the life of the Prophet Muhammad during the Makkah period. The information that we have falls in the various lessons. Appendix 1 correlates the original Quranic chapters with their chronological order.

LESSON 69(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE

Known values of Quranic thinking include self-development (*jihad al-akbar*) and social improvement (*ummah* as a middle community). Both of these require the recognition of gaps between ideals and practice as the gap causes a loss of truth and consistency. This strategy of recognizing the gaps between facts and ideals is connected with developing integrity and good faith.

QURANIC CHAPTER: THE CAVE (AL-KAHF) SIGNS 18:1-18:12

Makkah: *The Praise belongs to God*
Who caused the Book to descend to His servant
and makes not for it any crookedness, (18:1)
truth-loving, to warn of severe violence from that
which proceeds from His Presence
and to give good tidings to the ones who believe,
those who do as the ones in accord with morality,
that they will have a fairer compensation, (18:2)
ones who will abide in it eternally (18:3)
and to warn those who said: God took to Himself a son. (18:4)
They have no knowledge about it, nor had their fathers.
Troublesome is a word that goes forth from their mouths.
And they say nothing but a lie (18:5)
*so that perhaps **you** will be one who consumes **yourself** with grief*
for their sake if they believe not
in this discourse out of bitterness. (18:6)
Truly, We assigned whatever is in and on the earth as adornment
for it so that We try them with it
as to which of them are fairer in actions. (18:7)
And, truly, We are ones who make
whatever is on it, barren dust, dry earth. (18:8)
*Have **you** assumed that the Companions of the Cave*
and the Bearers of Inscription had been
a wonder among Our signs? (18:9)
And when the spiritual warriors took shelter in the Cave,
then, they said: Our Lord! Give us mercy from Thy Presence
and furnish us with right mindedness in our affair. (18:10)
So We sealed their ears in the Cave for a number of years. (18:11)
Again, We raised them up so that We might know
which of the two confederates

was better in calculating the space of time they lingered in expectation. (18:12)

COMMENTARY°

The section states its case very clearly from the outset: (18:1-18:8) This opening speaks of a very straightforward and decisive position. It combines this with praising God and expressing gratitude to Him for revealing the Book, i.e. the Quran , to 'His servant', Muhammad, and for making it clear, free of distortion and absolutely straight. There is nothing in it that may be described as evasive or dodgy. Its purpose is *to warn of severe violence from that which proceeds from His Presence.* (18:2)

The picture is clear right at the outset. There is no ambiguity or equivocation about the Quranic message. It is God who has bestowed the book from on high, and He is to be praised for so bestowing it. Muhammad is God's servant, which means that everyone else is also His servant. God has no son or partner. The Book itself is free of distortion and 'unerringly straight'. The concept of the Quran being straight is given first in the form of negating any possibility of distortion, and then reiterated in describing it as 'unerringly straight'. This makes for very strong emphasis.

Such clarity is maintained as the purpose of revealing the Quran is outlined. Indeed it has a dual purpose: *Truth-loving, to warn of severe violence from that which proceeds from His Presence and to give good tidings to the ones who believe, those who do as the ones in accord with morality, that they will have a fairer compensation.* (18:2) However, the stern warning is more strongly emphasized throughout. It begins in a general way, speaking of a severe punishment that God Himself may inflict. Then the warning is reiterated for a particular group of people: *And to warn those who said: God took to Himself a son.* (18: 4) In between the two warnings we have the happy news given to believers who do good works. This serves as a condition that ensures that faith should have practical evidence in real life. It is not confined to theoretical principles that may be endlessly discussed without effect in practice.

The chapter then moves to expose their false approach by which they judge the most important issue of all, i.e. faith: *They have no knowledge about it, nor had their fathers.* (18:5) Theirs is a despicable attitude when they utter such an enormity without proper consideration or real knowledge: *Troublesome is a word that goes forth from their mouths.* (18:5)

The description here makes use of the sound of the words to add

to the impression of horror given to the listeners. It begins with the adjective, '*troublesome*', to enhance the anticipation of something totally unacceptable. This is further increased by the inversion used in the sentence. The sound and rhythm of the Arabic original is particularly significant in giving a true sense of the enormity those ungrateful utter. This is brought to its climax in the last sentence which utilizes the form of negation and limitation: *And they say nothing but a lie.* (18:5)

The chapter then addresses the Prophet in a way that is akin to disapproval of his being saddened by his people's attitude which denies the truth of the Quran . He was pained by their rejection of God's guidance and their insistence on following the way which he knew would lead them to ruin. In a hint of disapproval, the Prophet is asked: *So that perhaps you will be one who consumes yourself with grief for their sake if they believe not in this discourse out of bitterness.* (18:6) Would your grief at their rejection of the truth cause you to kill yourself? These people do not deserve that you should feel any sorrow on their account. It is better that you should abandon them.

The Prophet is also reminded that God has made all the comforts and pleasures available on earth, and all riches and offspring, a sort of a test for humanity. The test will prove who of them does good in this life so as to earn its benefit as well as a happy destiny in the life to come: *Truly, We assigned whatever is in and on the earth as adornment for it so that We try them with it as to which of them are fairer in actions.* (18:7)

God certainly knows the position of every one of His creatures, but he rewards everyone only on the basis of the actions a person takes. It is actual deeds that are rewarded according to their merit. The chapter does not mention here those who do not do good works because the statement is clear with all that it entails.

The eventual outcome of all such adornment that is available on earth is inevitable. The earth will shed it all, and all living things on earth will die. Thus before the Day of Resurrection, the earth will be nothing more than a coarse and lifeless surface: *And, truly, We are ones who make whatever is on it, barren dust, dry earth.* (18:8) There is a clear element of toughness in the expression and in the scene it portrays. We are faced with an earth that has a desert-like surface with no trace of life over it.

After its brief opening, the chapter speaks about the people of the cave, depicting the effect faith has on believers: giving them reassurance and inner peace. Therefore, they prefer it to all material

riches and pleasures. When they find it hard to live as believers within their community, they seek refuge in a cave where they receive God's care and protection and enjoy His grace.

There are countless reports that speak about the sleepers in the cave, and just as many versions of their story. However, we have no use for any of these; we will confine ourselves to what the Quran tells us about them as it is the only source that provides true information. There may be other reports that have found their way into books of commentary on the Quran, but we will disregard all these as they lack proof of authenticity. In this we rely on good counsel, because the chapter contains an order prohibiting all argument concerning the people of the cave and reference to any source other than the Quran in trying to establish the truth about them.

The structure of the story begins with a short summary before its narration in detail. It is shown in a series of scenes with some gaps left in between. Nevertheless, all omissions are clearly understood.

Do you think that the people of the cave and the inscription were a wonder among Our signs? When those youths took refuge in the cave, they said: (18:9-18:12)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

Stimulate the students to ask questions about the Quranic signs.

Make the students comfortable when questioned so that they learn to value and master the questioning process.

Introduce questions in such a way that students come to see it as a way to get to the heart of matters and understand things from a different point of view.

Do not negate or embarrass the students.

Make sure the atmosphere is one of mutual support and cooperation.

Question the students about their reasoning behind their ideas.

Why? If that is so, what follows? Are you assuming that...?

How do you know that? Is the point that you are making that... or, ...? For example? Is this an example of what you mean..., or this?

Can I summarize your point as ...? What is your reason for saying that?

What do you mean when using this word? Is it possible that...?

Are there other ways of looking at it?
How else could we view this matter?

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

What ideas or principles does the Quranic message clarify?
What Idea am I using in my thinking?
Is this idea causing problems for me or for others?
What is the main hypothesis you are using in your reasoning?
Are you using this term in keeping with established usage?
What main distinctions should we draw in reasoning through this?
What idea is the sacred text using in its thinking?
Is there a problem with it?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I asked myself how I would follow up with the question I asked. Doing that, I was able to answer what that told me about my question.

QURANIC CHAPTER: THE CAVE (AL-KAHF)
SIGNS 18:13-18:17

Makkah: Book 28: Companions of the Cave (18:13)
Makkah: Book 28: Companions of the Cave (18:14)
Makkah: Book 28: Companions of the Cave (18:15)
Makkah: Book 28: Companions of the Cave (18:16)
Makkah: Book 28: Companions of the Cave (18:17)

QURANIC CHAPTER: THE CAVE (AL-KAHF)
SIGNS 18:18-18:22

Makkah: Book 28: Companions of the Cave (18:18)
Makkah: Book 28: Companions of the Cave (18:19)
Makkah: Book 28: Companions of the Cave (18:20)
Makkah: Book 28: Companions of the Cave (18:21)
Makkah: Book 28: Companions of the Cave (18:22)

LESSON 69(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

Quranic knowledge can be divided into multiple categories as this knowledge served as the basis for the development of Islamic sciences over the centuries. There are concepts that are basic to the study of Anthropology, History, Political Science, Mathematics, Logic and so forth. Understanding the interdisciplinary connections of the Quranic sacred text, take relevant concepts, knowledge and insight from the Quranic signs so that you are continuously finding connections between various categories of knowledge whether it be the basic principles of the arts or science.

Quranic critical thinkers:

> ... do not allow the somewhat arbitrary distinctions between academic subjects to control their thinking. When considering issues which transcend subjects, they bring relevant concepts, knowledge, and insights from many subjects to the analysis. They make use of insights into one subject to inform their understanding of other subjects. There are always connections between subjects: language and logic; history, geography, psychology, anthropology, physiology; politics, geography, science, ecology; math, science, economics.[1]

INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

Science: In doing research in the sciences, Quranic thinkers record from in depth observation, collecting as much information as possible and then critiquing their analysis of the gathered information so that they can draw the best possible inference through the use of inductive reasoning. He Who taught by the pen. He taught the human being what he knows not. (96:4-96:5)

Politics: Quranic thinkers try to obtain their own inferences after listening to .... what is said and follow the fairer of it. Those are those whom God guided. Those, they are imbued with intuition. (39:17-39:18) After listening to all opinions, they try to arrive at the best of the varying opinions as you differ in what you say. (51:8)

Education: Education in schools after listening to .... what is said and follow the fairer of it calls on students to learn all types of concepts, faiths and ideas and then choose their own.

Psychology: Our ability to reason (our cognitive system: *Will you not be reasonable?*) comes from our rational soul (*nafs-i natiqah*). We use our reason to help us regulate our animal soul (see Quran 12:53; *nafs-i ammarah*), our emotions and behavior by keeping them in a state of equilibrium, balance or moderation, on the Straight Path.

Note for the Teacher: Do not allow the somewhat arbitrary distinctions between academic subjects to control their thinking. When considering issues

which transcend subjects, they bring relevant concepts, knowledge, and insights from many subjects to the analysis. They make use of insights into one subject to inform their understanding of other subjects. There are always connections between subjects: language and logic; history, geography, psychology, anthropology, physiology; politics, geography, science, ecology; math, science, economics.[2]

QURANIC CHAPTER: THE CAVE (AL-KAHF)
SIGNS 18:23-18:31

Makkah: *And, surely, he will not*
say about something:
Truly, I will be one who does that tomorrow, (18:23)
but that you add: If God wills.
*And remember **your** Lord when **you** forgot.*
And say: Perhaps my Lord will guide me
nearer to right mindedness than this. (18:24)
Makkah: Book 28: Companions of the Cave (18:25)
Makkah: Book 28: Companions of the Cave (18:26)
*And recount what was revealed to **you** from the Book of Thy Lord.*
There is no one who changes His Words.
*And **you** will never find other than Him,*
that which is a haven. (18:27)
Madinah (18:28)
Makkah: *And say: The Truth is from your Lord.*
Then, let whoever willed, believe,
and let whoever willed, disbelieve.
Truly, We made ready a fire for the ones who are unjust.
They will be enclosed by its large tent.
And if they cry for help, they will be helped with rain,
water like molten copper that will scald their faces.
Miserable was the drink and how evil a place of rest! (18:29)
Truly, those who believed
and did as the ones in accord with morality,
truly, We will not waste the compensation of him
who did good actions. (18:30)
Those, for them are Gardens of Eden beneath which rivers run.
They will be adorned in them with bracelets of gold
and they will wear green garments of fine silk and brocade.
They will be ones who are reclining in it on raised benches.
Excellent is the reward for good deeds
and how excellent a place of rest! (18:31)

COMMENTARY°

In connection with the prohibition of dispute about unknown events of the past, an order is given not to pre-judge the future or its events. It is impossible for a person to know what may happen in the future. Therefore, he should not give any definite judgment of it: *And, surely, he will not say about something: Truly, I will be one who does that tomorrow* (18:23)

This is what a Muslim should do when he forgets to relate his intentions to God's will. He should remember God and renew his reliance on Him. *But that you add: If God wills. And remember your Lord when you had forgotten.* (18:24) He should also hope to remain always conscious of God, turning to Him in all situations and all future actions, always saying: *And say: Perhaps my Lord will guide me nearer to right mindedness than this.* (18:24) This short prayer indicates that it is not so easy to always turn to God in all affairs. Therefore, the prayer to try always to maintain it and improve on one's situation.

A further comment is added in the form of a directive to the Prophet to recite what God has revealed to him, as it represents the final word, and the truth that admits no falsehood whatsoever. He should seek refuge with Him, for no one can provide any shelter other than He. When the young men of the cave sought His protection, He spread His grace over them and provided them with His guidance: *And recount what was revealed to you from the Book of Your Lord. There is no one who changes His Words. And you will never find other than Him, that which is a haven.* (18:27)

Some reports suggest that these signs: (18:28-18:29) were revealed when some of the noblemen of the Quraysh demanded that the Prophet should expel his poor Companions if he were to hope that the chiefs of the Quraysh tribe would ever come to believe in his message. Thus people like Bilal, Ammar, Suhayb, Khabbab and Abd Allah ibn Masud would have to be expelled from his companionship. Or at least the Prophet should make special arrangements, whereby he could meet the masters of the Quraysh on their own, in a place where none of the poor and the deprived were admitted. The rich, they argued, would be irritated if they had to sit in the same place with them, because their clothing smelled of perspiration.

God revealed to him the sign which starts with His command: *And have you patience yourself with those who call to their Lord in the morning and the evening, wanting His Countenance. And let not your eyes pass over them wanting the adornment of this present life. And obey not him whose heart We made neglectful of Our Remem-*

brance and who followed his own desires and whose affair had been excess. (18:28)

Thus He sets the true values clearly and permanently. These establish a standard that never fails. When this has been accomplished and the true criterion has been put in place. *And say: The Truth is from your Lord. Then, let whoever willed, believe, and let whoever willed, disbelieve. Truly, We made ready a fire for the ones who are unjust. They will be enclosed by its large tent. And if they cry for help, they will be helped with rain, water like molten copper that will scald their faces. Miserable was the drink and how evil a place of rest!* (18:29) The Quranic message will never seek to bend its values in order to please anyone and gratify his wishes. It does not borrow any value from any society implementing standards of tribal honor. It has its own values and it will continue to implement these only.

The Prophet is thus to remain patient, and not to precipitate matters. He is to content himself with those who call on their Lord morning and evening, seeking His countenance. Their aim is to win His pleasure. Therefore, to Him only should they appeal at all times, and in all situations. They should never change their purpose. Indeed they determinedly seek their goal which is more honorable and far superior in every way to any goal sought by people who are content with this life and seek nothing beyond its confines.

Being content and patient means that the Prophet should have for his true companions those very people the chiefs of the Quraysh wanted expelled. He is to sit with them and instruct them in their faith and its requirements. They are indeed the better set of people. It is their type that supports new messages best. A new faith or message does not rely on those who accept it only when it appears victorious, or when it gives them a position of leadership or other type of material gain. A new message is truly supported and firmly consolidated when it has adherents of sincere heart who turn to God seeking nothing other than to win His pleasure. No position of honor, pursuit of pleasure or achievement of any material gain discolors their sincerity .

Do not let your attention pass them by in order to contemplate the superficial comforts of this world, in which people compete. *And let not your eyes pass over them wanting the adornment of this present life.* (18:28) All this is no more than an outward beauty which remains much inferior to the high horizon to which those who call on their Lord morning and evening' aspire to, because they seek only to please Him and win His acceptance.

The Prophet is further instructed: *And obey not him whose heart*

We made neglectful of Our Remembrance and who followed his own desires and whose affair had been excess. (18:28) He must not pay any attention to them when they demand that they must be separated from the poor. Had they remembered God, they would have banished from their minds any thoughts of conceit and arrogance. They would have recognized their position in front of God, who looks at all humanity in the same way and places them in the same rank. They would have felt that in faith all people are brothers. But they continue to implement standards of tribal honor, allowing fleeting desires to dictate their attitudes. Therefore, both they and their views are worth no attention, because they themselves have not paid attention to God and His commandments.

The Quranic message places all human beings on the same level before God. They do not claim a position on the basis of their wealth, lineage or social standing. All these are transient. The real criterion to distinguish people is their standing with their Lord, which is determined by their sincerity in seeking His pleasure and their dedication to His cause.

We have left his heart alone because he directed all his attention and all his efforts to his selfish pursuits, wealth, family, pleasures and desires. Such preoccupations leave no time and no room for remembrance of God. Indeed when anyone places them at the top of his list, he does not have time for God, and in consequence, God lets him pursue these goals further and become even more removed from His remembrance. His days pass rapidly and he comes to his end in order to face what God has in store for those who wrong themselves.

This: *And say: The Truth is from your Lord. Then, let whoever willed, believe, and let whoever willed, disbelieve. Truly, We made ready a fire for the ones who are unjust. They will be enclosed by its large tent. And if they cry for help, they will be helped with rain, water like molten copper that will scald their faces. Miserable was the drink and how evil a place of rest!* (18:29) is what the Prophet should proclaim in all clarity and firmness. The truth does not bend for the sake of anyone. It follows its own straight way. It is clear, solid, strong, free of all crookedness and manipulation. It is, then, each individual's own decision whether to take it up or leave it: Whoever does not like the truth may banish himself from it. Anyone who does not wish to make his desires fall in line with the truth should know that no privileges are given at the expense of faith. A person who does not lower his head to God and His majesty has no place in the service of God's message.

Faith does not belong to anyone who makes concessions in it. It

belongs to God who needs no one. Faith does not obtain strength if it is supported by people who do not seek it for its own sake, or who do not accept it as it is. A person who does not wish to sit with people dedicated to God's cause because he feels himself above them will have nothing to contribute to the Muslim community. Such a person is better left out.

The section then portrays a scene of the hereafter, describing what is prepared for the ungrateful on the one hand and for the believers on the other. The ungrateful will have a fire that has been made ready to receive them: *And say: The Truth is from your Lord. Then, let whoever willed, believe, and let whoever willed, disbelieve. Truly, We made ready a fire for the ones who are unjust.* (18:29) It is all made, set and brought forward. It does not require any new effort to receive them. No one is needed to kindle that fire, and it does not take any time to light or burn fiercely. God does not need anything to create whatever He wishes other than to actually will it, and it exists. The expression here uses the term, 'prepare', to indicate speed of action. Everything is put in place to take the wrongdoers and the ungrateful straight to the fire that is already prepared to receive them.

It is a fire that has huge folds that surge to encompass its inhabitants. They are securely captured there, with no hope of escape or rescue. Nor is there any chance of having a breath of cooling air, or the chance of a reduction in the suffering. Should they cry for help or to be spared the burning fire, help is given to them in the form of filthy water which is described in words which some commentators believe to mean 'molten lead', while others define it as 'boiling oil'. Should anyone's face get near it, it would certainly scald them. What will it do, then, to throats and stomachs, should the wrongdoers attempt to drink it? *They will be enclosed by its large tent. And if they cry for help, they will be helped with rain, water like molten copper that will scald their faces.* (18:29) It is a terrible situation that they find themselves in when they so urgently need a drink, but they only have what the Quran truthfully describes as: *Miserable was the drink.* (18:29) Moreover, the fire and its billowing folds are not the place where to seek rest: *And how evil a place of rest!* (18:29) In this description there is an element of bitter irony. They are not in the fire to take rest, but to be burnt in punishment for their wrongdoing. But this description also serves as a contrast with the fate of the believers in heaven. The two ends are opposite extremes.

The opposite picture shows the believers who have done God-conscious deeds in heaven where they will permanently stay: *Those, for them are Gardens of Eden beneath which rivers run. They will*

be adorned in them with bracelets of gold and they will wear green garments of fine silk and brocade. They will be ones who are reclining in it on raised benches. Excellent is the reward for good deeds and how excellent a place of rest! (18:31)

These running waters provide all the elements of a cool atmosphere, pleasant scenery, gardens and a fresh breeze. The believers are in these gardens where they actually recline and rest, in full luxurious attire made of different types of fine silk, some of which is light, while the other is thick like velvet. They also wear bracelets of gold and enjoy other luxuries. The comment here is accurate: *Excellent is the reward for good deeds and how excellent a place of rest!* (18:31)

These are the two widely different ends. Let everyone choose which one to have. The truth has been made absolutely clear by none other than God Himself, and the choice is open to everyone: (18:29) We see here a subtle reference to the attitude of the Quraysh ungrateful who demanded that the Prophet should either expel the poor from among his followers, or at least set up a different meeting place for the elders of the Quraysh, because it was beneath them to sit with the poor. They are again given the choice, either to sit with the believers, even though they are poor or they can have their resting place in the billowing folds of the fire and enjoy molten lead for refreshment. For those smelly clothes contain within them hearts that are full of faith, and minds that always remember God.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Learning and studying techniques

Your path for most effective learning is through knowing...

Visual/spatial learning
Learning, for visual-spatial learners, takes place all at once...

Learning as a student-athlete or student-performer

Indicators of a "kinesthetic intelligence" or body smarts...

Learning as an adult
Does higher education seem like a foreign culture to you?

Active learning
Active learning is experiential, mindful, and engaging...

Action learning
Action learning is a learning and problem-solving strategy for organizations...

Mathematical language learning strategies
In learning the language of mathematics, we follow the advice that practice make perfect, and patience a helpful virtue...

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I followed the guidelines below:

- Do your homework!
- Read critically; form your own opinions
- Review your notes from the previous lecture and reading for the day
- Communicate immediately with professors about any study problems

Lesson 69(3). Critical Thinking Strategy Generating Implications, Consequences

What are implications?

Implications follow from our thoughts.

What are consequences?

Consequences follow from our actions.

Reasoning Well

The ability to reason well is measured in part by an ability to understand and enunciate the implications and, then, the consequences of the reasoning. For example: I think this or that. What does this thought imply? What would be the consequences if I were to act upon that thought?

Implications in Reasoning

When you spell out the implications of your reasoning:

Have you succeeded in identifying significant and realistic implications?

Have you confined yourselves to unimportant and unrealistic ones?

Have you enunciated the implications of your views clearly and precisely enough to permit your thinking to be evaluated by the validity of those implications?

Can you trace the implications and consequences that come from your reasoning?

Quranic Chapter: The Cave (al-Kahf) Signs 18:32-18:44

Makkah: *And propound to them*
the parable of two men:
We assigned to one of them two gardens of grapevines
and We encircled them with date palm trees
and We made crops between them. (18:32)
Both the gardens gave their produce and fail nothing at all.
We caused a river to gush forth in the midst of them. (18:33)
And there had been fruit for him.
Then, he said to his companion while he converses with him:
I have more wealth than thee
and am mightier than a group of men or jinn. (18:34)
And he entered his garden
while he is one who is unjust to himself.
He said: I think that this will not be destroyed ever. (18:35)
And I think that the Hour will not be one that arises.

And if I would be returned to my Lord, I would,
surely, find better than this as an overturning. (18:36)
And his companion said to him while he converses with him:
*Were **you** ungrateful to Him Who created **you** out of earth dust,*
again, out of seminal fluid and,
*again, shaped **you** into a man?* (18:37)
Certainly, He is God, my Lord,
and I will not ascribe partners with my Lord anyone. (18:38)
*Would that when **you** had entered **your** garden **you** had said:*
What God willed! There is no strength but with God!
*If **you** see I am less than you in wealth and children.* (18:39)
*Then, perhaps my Lord will give me better than **your** garden*
and will send on it a thunderclap from heaven.
And it will come to be in the morning
a place of slippery earth. (18:40)
Or it will come to be in the morning
that its water will be sinking into the ground
*so that **you** will never be able to seek it out.* (18:41)
And its fruit was enclosed. It came to be in the morning
he turns around and around
the palms of his hands in wretchedness
for what he spent on it
while it was one that has fallen down in ruins.
And he says: Would that I not ascribe partners
with my Lord anyone! (18:42)
And there is no faction to help him other than God.
And he had been one who is helpless. (18:43)
All protection there belongs to God, The Truth.
He is Best in rewarding for good deeds
and Best in consequence. (18:44)

COMMENTARY°

This passage is followed by a story of two men and two gardens, given as an example of what is permanently valuable and what is no more than transitory. It paints two examples of human beings: the first seeks pride in the luxuries of this world, while the other is fully content with his relationship with God. Each is seen in practical life. The first who, in the Quranic example, has two gardens delineates a man dazzled with riches. He feels himself powerful with what he has been given, so he forgets the Supreme Power who controls everything in people's lives, and thinks that his wealth is permanent. This gives him a feeling that his power is everlasting.

The other is a believer who derives his position and status through faith. He always remembers his Lord, realizing that the blessings he enjoys are in themselves evidence of the One who grants all such blessings. Therefore, he knows that he should always praise his Lord and express his gratitude to Him for what he has been granted:

Set forth to them the case of two men, to one of whom We gave two vineyards and surrounded them with date palms, and placed a field of grain in between. Each of the two gardens yielded its produce and never failed to do so in any way. In the midst of them We caused a stream to flow. And so [the man] had fruit in abundance. (18:32-18:34)

The two gardens are full of fruit, having vineyards which are made even more splendid with a siege of date palms. In between the two gardens is a large field which the man uses to cultivate grains and other plants. A river running in between the two gardens adds much that is pleasant to the whole scene, because the running water reassures the owner of inexhaustible produce that, in turn, bring much wealth.

This: *Both the gardens gave their produce and fail nothing at all. We caused a river to gush forth in the midst of them.* (18:33) is again a picture of continuing prosperity. What is worth noting here is that in the original Arabic text, negating any failure by the two gardens to yield their produce is described as 'doing no wrong or injustice' in that respect. This gives an element of contrast with their owner who does himself great wrong by being arrogant and ungrateful to God for all the blessings he enjoys. He does not praise his Lord for what He has given him. This is an action full of conceit which means, in effect, that he is unfair to himself.

We actually see the man going into one of his gardens, gratified as he looks at it. He is full of pride, strutting like a peacock, calling for admiration. He speaks arrogantly to his friend whom he knows to be of limited means: (18:34)

He then walks into one of the two gardens with his friend. His attitude is that of someone conceited and ungrateful. He has completely forgotten God, thinking that the two gardens will never fail to yield their produce. In the height of this conceit, he denies the Last Hour, when all are resurrected and gathered together before their Lord. Besides, should this Last Hour be true, he is certain to have a position of favor there. He has been favored here in this life when he has been given his two gardens. So he is sure to have more favors granted to him in the hereafter.

And having thus wronged his soul: (18:35-18:36) This is plain arrogance. It makes people who have wealth, position, power and influence think that the values that dictate the way they are treated here in this life will apply in their favor in the life to come. They think they will be treated in the same way in God's Supreme Society. Their line of thinking is that since they enjoy such privileges in this life, they must then have a position of favor with the Lord of heavens.

His poor friend, who does not possess wealth, position, gardens or crops, is more confident as to the results of his nobler and better established values. He feels strong as a result of his faith, and he is certain of the support he receives from God Almighty, to whom all creatures submit. Therefore, he confronts his arrogant friend with the truth showing him how conceited he is. He reminds him of how he is created from clay and from a sperm. He also directs him to the sort of attitude he should maintain towards God. He warns him against the result to which his conceit could lead him. He declares that he hopes to receive what is better than, and superior to, his friend's gardens and their fruit:

His friend replied in the course of their discussion: Do you deny Him who has created you out of dust, and then out of a drop of sperm, and in the end fashioned you into a man? But for my part, I believe that He is God, my Lord, and none shall I associate with my Lord. If only you said as you entered your garden: (18:37-18:41)

This is an example of how faith makes a believer very powerful. He does not care for wealth, might, or arrogance. He states the truth clearly, without hesitation or cowardice. There is no room for bending the truth in order to please anyone, be that a friend or someone mighty. A believer feels that he is far higher than all power and wealth. What God has for him is far superior to any riches or pleasures this life may bring. God's grace is all that he seeks, and His grace is plentiful and always available. On the other hand, God's punishment is severe and could befall the arrogant at any time.

The story then takes us suddenly from the scene of growth and prosperity to one of destruction and barrenness, from arrogance and conceit to repentance and seeking forgiveness. What the man of faith warned against has come true:

So his fruitful gardens were encompassed with ruin, and there he was, wringing his hands over all that he had spent on that which now lay waste, with its trellises caved in; and he could only say: (18:42)

The whole scene is raised before our eyes, and we see all the fruit of the gardens destroyed, as though the calamity befell it from

all sides, leaving nothing untouched. The two gardens are totally destroyed with their trellises caved in. The owner realizes that he can do nothing to save any portion of his gardens or the plantation in between. He wrings his hands in sorrow, bewailing his misfortune which has left all his wealth destroyed and all his labour wasted. He is now repentant for having associated partners with God, acknowledging that He alone is the Lord of the universe. Although the man never previously mentioned the ascribing of divinity to anyone other than God, the fact that he placed a worldly value higher than the values of faith represents such association of partners with God. He now regrets his past attitude and dissociates himself from it. Alas! It is too late.

At this point the chapter declares in all clarity that all protection comes from God: all power belongs to Him; all support comes from Him; His reward is the best reward; and what He stores for us is best and everlasting: (18:43-18:44)

Thus the curtains fall with the gardens in total destruction, and the owner wringing his hands in regret and sorrow. Beyond that, we realize that God's power and majesty overwhelm all.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Ask:

On what evidence is my conclusion based?
Where did I get the evidence?
How could I find out what other evidence exists?
What evidence supports opposing views?
Is the evidence sufficient or do I need more?

How would your rate yourself? Ask yourself:

Do I talk about what I have not yet done?
Why do I do so?
What evidence do I have?
What is the difference between an implication and a consequence?

LESSON 69(4). CRITICAL THINKING MORAL TRAIT
BELIEF IN ONE GOD (*TAWHID*)

The greatest emphasis in the Quran is on the Oneness or Unity of God (*tawhid*, monotheism) which implies belief that God is One. He created the universe and all that is in it and that at every moment there is a new creation. *Were We wearied by the first creation? No! They are perplexed about a new creation.* (50:15) He created moral order among us where we are judged according to the merit of our deeds: *Whoever does the weight of an atom of good will see it. Whoever does the weight of an atom of the worst will see it.* (99:7-99:8)

We are not judged arbitrarily: *Know that God will never be One Who Causes to Change a divine blessing when He was gracious to a folk unless they first change what is within themselves. And, truly, God is Hearing, Knowing.* (8:53)

This moral order works without any favor, not only in the case of individuals, but also in the case of societies and peoples: *Mention when Moses said to his folk: O my folk! Remember the divine blessing of God on you when He assigned Prophets among you and assigned kings and gives you what He gave not to anyone of the worlds.* (5:20)

God has entered into covenant with human beings within the limits of this moral order with people as such and not with particular nations or races: *O those who believed! Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God and let not that you hate a folk drive you into not dealing justly. Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness (taqwa). Be God-conscious of God. Truly, God is Aware of what you do.* (5:8)

Reason: First of all, our proof of our belief ultimately depends upon our ability to reason. Without reason, we would not be able to understand the Quranic signs nor respond to their message. The connection between faith and reason is the key to our Quranic critical thinking. It is through this connection that our thoughts and emotions grow into a harmony with each other. The Quran repeatedly asks us to think about the signs of God in the universe and within ourselves, to understand God's presence within us and in the universe, and ultimately to find the truth. The concept of the Quranic signs seeks creates a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those who have intuition recollect.* (38:29)

Good deeds: Proof that we believe in the One God (unity) is through competing with one another in good deeds, (3:114; 23:61) *Do good. Truly God loves the ones who are doers of good.* (2:195) *And among the good deeds is to obey God and to obey the Messenger.* (5:92) Note that 5:92 commands us to obey God and to obey the Messenger. It does not say: obey God and obey Muhammad as a Messenger was sent to many different communities.

QURANIC CHAPTER: THE CAVE (AL-KAHF) SIGNS 18:45-18:49

Makkah: *And propound for them*
the parable of this present life:
It is like water that We caused to descend from heaven.
Then, plants of the earth mingled with it
and it becomes straw in the morning that winnows in the winds.
And God had been over everything
One Who is Omnipotent. (18:45)
Wealth and children are the adornment of this present life.
But that which endures are ones in accord with morality.
These are better with ***your*** *Lord in reward for good deeds*
and better for hopefulness. (18:46)
And on a Day We will set in motion the mountains
and ***you*** *will see the earth as that which will depart.*
And We will assemble them
and not leave out anyone of them. (18:47)
And they were presented before ***your*** *Lord ranged in rows.*
Certainly, you drew near Us as We created you the first time.
Nay! You claimed that We never assign for you
something that is promised. (18:48)
And the Book was set in place and ***you*** *will see*
the ones who sin being ones who are apprehensive
as to what is in it.
And they will say: Woe to us! What is this Book?
It neither leaves out anything small or great,
but counted everything.
They will find present what their hands had done.
And ***your*** *Lord does not wrong anyone.* (18:49)

COMMENTARY°

Now this section draws another scene showing life on earth in its totality, and we realize that it is similar to those destroyed gardens. It is of a fleeting nature, lasting only a very short while and lacking solid substance: *And propound for them the parable of this present life: It is like water that We caused to descend from heaven. Then, plants of the earth mingled with it and it becomes straw in the morning that winnows in the winds. And God had been over everything One Who is Omnipotent.* (18:45)

This scene, with all its movement, is depicted rapidly so as to enhance within us the feelings of a transitory life, one which is short and ends in death. Here we see water pouring down from the skies,

but it does not run or form watercourses. It is immediately absorbed by plants, but these plants do not grow, nor do they yield ripe fruit. It is all destroyed, becoming nothing more than dry stubble, blown away by the winds. The whole duration of life is thus ended within three short sentences. The original Arabic text uses all forms that indicate rapid transition from one stage to the next: the fall of water, then its absorption by plants, and then its blowing away by the wind. How short is life, and how worthless!

Having shown this scene of the present, transitory life to full effect, the chapter makes a contrast between the values to which people attach great importance in this life and those which have the upper position at all times. All this is stated from the point of view of the divine faith: *Wealth and children are the adornment of this present life. But that which endures are ones in accord with morality. These are better with your Lord in reward for good deeds and better for hopefulness.* (18:46)

Wealth and children are the most important things people covet in this life. The Quranic message does not forbid enjoying these, provided that they are derived through legitimate means. Moreover, it gives them their appropriate value in relation to the everlasting life to come. They are adornments, but not criteria to evaluate people with. It is not right that people's status should be measured according to what they have of these. True value should be given to what endures, and that means all good works, including words, actions and worship.

People's hopes are normally very closely linked to wealth and children. However, the deeds that endure, i.e. good works, bring better reward and fulfil greater hopes. Therefore, believers should look to these for a more wholesome fulfilment of their hopes. They are bound to receive their result and reward on the Day of Reckoning.

In all this we see a consistent line, starting with the directive to the Prophet to remain patient and content: *And have you patience yourself with those who call to their Lord in the morning and the evening, wanting His Countenance.* (18:28) We also see the same message imparted in the story of the two gardens and the two friends, as well as in the scene showing the value of the present life. This is all perfected with this last statement explaining the values of this life and those of the life to come. All this serves to put human values into the proper perspective.

These signs: (18:47-18:49) portray an image in which nature forms an essential part. Horror is seen in its every detail as well as in people's hearts. Here we see firm mountains disappearing. What then

will happen to hearts? The whole earth will appear void and barren, without hills, mountains, slopes or valleys to block anyone's view. The same applies to hearts and consciences: they will be unable to hide anything away.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

WHAT IS ACTIVE QURANIC LISTENING?

Model active listening to responses by summarizing in your own words the content or gist of their answers.
Expand on the exercise by calling on classmates to do same.
Take time for thought processing in answering.
Create the pause for a thoughtful response rather than expect an immediate reply.
Allow for unexpected turns that suit the purpose and invite gestalt!
Use shock or disruption to shake up a rather boring experience.
Work in small group exercises modeled on questioning.
Merge to incrementally larger groups.
Give report from merged group.
Provide for peer feedback and class discussion.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I realized that I sometimes think with a bias in favor of myself.
I realized I sometimes become irritable over small things.
I realized that I have sometimes said something 'irrational' to get my way.
I realized I have sometimes tried to impose my will upon others.
I remembered I have sometimes failed to speak my mind when I felt strongly about something and then later felt resentment.

LESSON 69(5). CRITICAL THINKING MORAL TRAIT GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (*TAQWA*)

The Quran is revealed to produce this attitude of God-consciousness among people: *an Arabic Recitation without any crookedness so that perhaps they would be God-conscious.* (39:28) It is the presence of this moral attitude which saves people from destruction (27:53; 41:18) and it is this which helps them maintain God's commands in their conjugal life, (2:24; 4:129) in sacrifice, (5:30; 22:37) in different aspects of social life, (2:177) and in fulfilling faithfully their social obligations. (25:63-25:74)

To be God-conscious (*muttaqi*) (to guard against evil) is to exhibit virtuous conduct: *It is not virtuous conduct that you turn your faces towards the East or the West. Rather virtuous conduct consists of: Whoever believes in God and the Last Day, and the angels, and the Book, and the Prophets. Proof of belief in the One God is in one's actions, behavior or practicing of this belief which includes, among other practices: The practice of good deeds: to spend out of one's substance, out of love for God, for kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, for the ransom of prisoners-of-war; to be steadfast in prayers, and to pay the purifying alms* (zakat)*; to fulfill the contracts which have been made; and to be firm and patient in pain (or suffering), adversity, and times of danger. Such people as follow these are possessed of true God-consciousness.* (2:177-2:178)

The better and more lasting reward of the Lord is for those who believe and put their trust in Him; those who avoid the greater crimes and shameful deeds, and, even when they are angry, they forgive; those who hearken to their Lord, and establish regular prayer; who conduct their affairs by mutual consultation; who spend out of what God bestows on them for sustenance; who, when an oppressive wrong is inflicted on them, (are not cowed but) help and defend themselves; and those who recompense injury with injury in degree equal thereto and, better still, forgive and make reconciliation. But indeed if any do help and defend themselves after a wrong is done to them, against such there is no cause of blame. The blame is only against those who oppress people with wrongdoing and insolently transgress beyond bounds through the land, defying right and justice; for such there will be a grievous penalty. But indeed showing patience and forgiveness is an exercise of courageous will and resolution in the conduct of affairs. God-consciousness results in developing a sense of humility.

QURANIC CHAPTER: THE CAVE (AL-KAHF)
SIGNS 18:50-18:53

Makkah: Book 25: Adam (18:50)
I called them not to witness
the creation of the heavens and the earth

nor to their own creation of themselves
nor took I to myself
the ones who are led astray as assistants. (18:51)
And on a Day when He will say:
Cry out to My associates, those who you claimed.
Then, they will call out to them, but they will not respond to them
and We will make a gulf of doom between them. (18:52)
And the unjust will see the ones who sin in the fire.
They thought that they are ones who are about to fall in it
and they will not find a place to turn from it. (18:53)

COMMENTARY°

The guilty facing such a difficult situation are certainly aware, in this life, that Satan is their enemy. Nevertheless, they befriended him and he led them to their predicament. How strange that they should take Satan and his progeny for friends and protectors when they know them to be hostile since the first encounter between Adam and Iblis: *And mention when We said to the angels: Prostrate yourselves to Adam! So they prostrated themselves but Iblis. He had been among the jinn and he disobeyed the command of His Lord. Will you, then, take him to yourselves and his offspring to be protectors other than Me while they are an enemy to you? Miserable was it to give in place ones who are unjust!* (18:50)

This story highlights the singularity of some people's attitude as they take Satan and his progeny for protectors and patrons in preference to God. It represents an outright disobedience of God's commands and the neglect of obligations and duties He has assigned to them.

Why do they befriend these, their enemies, when they possess neither real knowledge nor reliable strength? God has not brought them to witness His creation of the heavens and the earth, or even their own creation. Nor does He seek help or support from them: *I called them not to witness the creation of the heavens and the earth nor to their own creation of themselves nor took I to myself the ones who are led astray as assistants.* (18:51) They are no more than creatures whom God has created. They do not know what God has chosen to keep hidden from them, nor does He need their help.

Another scene of the Day of Judgment follows, portraying the end that awaits the guilty and those to whom they ascribe a share of divinity: (18:52-18:53)

They are in a position where no claim has any value unless it is supported by irrefutable proof. The Lord who sits for judgment on

that day commands them to bring their partners whom they alleged to enjoy favor with God. He tells them to call them up. Yet such people are lost. They forget that they are already witnessing the Day of Reckoning. So they call on their former partners who do not make any kind of response. They are no more than creatures of God who cannot avail themselves or anyone else of anything. They also have to face the great events that take place on the Day of Judgment. God places between such worshipped deities and those who worshipped them a gulf of doom too wide for either group to cross over. That gulf is the fire of hell: *And on a Day when He will say: Cry out to My associates, those who you claimed. Then, they will call out to them, but they will not respond to them and We will make a gulf of doom between them.* (18:52)

Those who are guilty will look around and fear will overwhelm them. They expect that at any moment they will fall into the fire. It is extremely hard to expect to be punished, particularly when the punishment is ready and there is no chance of escape: *And the unjust will see the ones who sin in the fire. They thought that they are ones who are about to fall in it and they will not find a place to turn from it.* (18:53)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Ask: What exactly is the question I am trying to ask?

How does it relate to my goals, purposes, and needs?

1. Wherever possible take questions one by one. State the question as clearly and precisely as you can.

2. Study the question to make clear the kind of question you are dealing with. Figure out, for example, what sorts of things you are going to have to do to answer it. Distinguish questions over which you have some control from questions over which you have no control. Set aside the questions over which you have no control, concentrating your efforts on those questions you can potentially answer.

3. Figure out the information you need and actively seek that in-

formation.

4. Carefully analyze and interpret the information you collect, drawing what reasonable inferences you can.

5. Figure out your options for action. What can you do in the short term? In the long term? Distinguish questions under your control from questions beyond your control. Recognize explicitly your limitations as far as money, time, and power.

6. Evaluate your options, taking into account your advantages and disadvantages in the situation you are in.

7. Adopt a strategic approach to the question and follow through on that strategy. This may involve direct action or a carefully thought-through wait-and-see strategy.

8. When you act, monitor the implications of your action as you begin to emerge. Be ready at a moment's notice to revise your strategy if the situation requires it. Be prepared to shift your strategy or your analysis or question, or all three, as more information about the question becomes available to you.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I frequently evaluated my listening.
I actively listening for main points.
I was able to summarize what my instructor said in my own words.
I was able to elaborate what is meant by key terms.
I learned to frequently evaluate my reading.
I am trying to read the Quranic text actively.
I am asking questions as I read.
I am learning to distinguish what I understand from what I don't.

LESSON 69(6). CRITICAL THINKING MORAL TRAIT VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE

Virtuous conduct, integrity or moral uprightness, the state of being whole and undivided or a sense of inner and outer unity develops through moral discipline. It produces the attitude of God-consciousness (*taqwa*) when the discipline of prayer, fasting, giving the purifying alms, and pilgrimage is practiced. People are commanded to guard strictly their habit of formal prayers and stand before God in a devout frame of mind, (2:238) to pay the purifying alms, (98:5) to spend in charity secretly and openly (25:29)—a beautiful loan to God (72:20)—a bargain that will never fail, (25:29) involving a glad tidings for the believers (22:34) and a cause of prosperity (31:5) and spiritual joy. (20:139) Those people who follow these principles are on the right path towards the moral trait of integrity under the true guidance of the Lord. (31:5; 97:5) They remove the stain of evil from the people (11:114) and help them refrain from shameful and unjust deeds. (29:45) It is the practice of all believing people that when God grants them power in the land, they enjoin the right and forbid the wrong.

HISTORY

This sign: *And **you** Lord is Forgiving, Possessor of Mercy. If He were to take them to task for what they earned, He will quicken the punishment for them. But for them is what they are promised, from which they will never find a way to elude it* (18:58) was revealed about Umayya ibn Khalaf al-Jumahi. He asked the Prophet to do something that he disliked. He asked him to chase away the poor from his assembly and draw to him, instead, the leaders of Makkah. God revealed: *And have **you** patience **yourself** with those who call to their Lord in the morning and the evening, wanting His Countenance. And let not **your** eyes pass over them wanting the adornment of this present life. And obey not him whose heart We made neglectful of Our Remembrance and who followed his own desires and whose affair had been excess.* (18:28) That is, God sealed the heart such that a person who follows his own lust (i.e. idolatry) will never believe in God's divine Oneness.[3]

Wahidi says in regard to (18:58): Uyaynah ibn Hisn, al-Aqra ibn Habis and their families came to the Messenger of and said: O Messenger, if only you could sit at the front of the assembly and remove these people, meaning: Salman al-Farsi, Abu Dharr al-Ghifari and other poor Muslims—and their smelly outer garments— because the only thing they had on them were these woolen outer garments—from us, then we could sit with you, talk to you and learn from you!

As a response, God revealed 18:57-18:58, threatening them with

hell. *And who does greater wrong than he who was reminded of the signs of his Lord, then, turned aside from them and forgot what his hands put forward? Truly, We laid sheathes on their hearts so that they should not understand it and heaviness in their ears. And if **you** call them to the guidance, yet they will not be truly guided ever.* (18:57) *And **you** Lord is Forgiving, Possessor of Mercy. If He were to take them to task for what they earned, He will quicken the punishment for them. But for them is what they are promised, from which they will never find a way to elude it.* (18:58)

The Prophet stood up and went looking for them. He found them at the back of the mosque making remembrance of God. He said: Praise be to God Who did not take away my soul until He commanded me to restrain myself with men of my community. It is with you that I live and with you that I die.[4]

QURANIC CHAPTER: THE CAVE (AL-KAHF)
SIGNS 18:54-18:59

Makkah: *And, certainly, We diversified in this, the Quran,*
every kind of example for humanity.
And the human being had been
more than anything argumentative.(18:54)
Nothing prevented humanity from believing
when the guidance drew near to them
or from asking forgiveness of their Lord,
but that approaches them a custom of the ancient ones
or approaches them the punishment face to face. (18:55)
We send not the ones who are sent,
but as ones who give good tidings and as ones who warn.
And those who were ungrateful dispute with falsehood
in order to refute The Truth by it.
And they took My signs to themselves
—and what they were warned of—in mockery. (18:56)
And who does greater wrong
than he who was reminded of the signs of his Lord,
then, turned aside from them
and forgot what his hands put forward?
Truly, We laid sheathes on their hearts
so that they should not understand it
and heaviness in their ears.
*And if **you** call them to the guidance,*
yet they will not be truly guided ever. (18:57)
*And **you** Lord is Forgiving, Possessor of Mercy.*

If He were to take them to task for what they earned,
He will quicken the punishment for them.
But for them is what they are promised, from which
they will never find a way to elude it. (18:58)
And these towns, We caused them to perish
when they did wrong
and We assigned for their destruction
what is promised. (18:59)

COMMENTARY°

They could certainly have escaped the fire and all punishment, had they only opened their hearts to the Quran and not opposed the truth it lays down. God certainly gave them all sorts of examples, covering all situations and circumstances: *And, certainly, We diversified in this, the Quran, every kind of example for humanity. And the human being had been more than anything argumentative.* (18:54) The chapter describes a person here as 'a thing'. The literal translation of the above sentence reads: But of all things, the human being is the most contentious.

It chooses such expression in order to encourage a person to be less arrogant and to feel that he is one of God's countless creatures, although he is the worst in argument and contention, after God has given solid, irrefutable argument, clearly expounded in the Quran .

The section then documents the false arguments which the ungrateful, who represent the majority of humanity, have sought to provide:

What is there to keep people from accepting the faith now that guidance has come to them, and from seeking forgiveness from their Lord, unless it be that they are waiting for the fate of the [sinful] people of ancient times to befall them as well, or for the suffering to be brought before their eyes? *Nothing prevented humanity from believing when the guidance drew near to them or from asking forgiveness of their Lord, but that approaches them a custom of the ancient ones or approaches them the punishment face to face.* (18:55)

They have received guidance in plenty, which should have been sufficient for them to believe and follow God's orders. But they demanded for themselves the sort of suffering that befell nations of old. They made such a demand thinking that God's punishment would never overtake them, or they did so in mockery. Sometimes they modified their demands, asking for the punishment to be shown directly to them. That, they argued, would prove what the Prophets preached and then they would believe in them.

Answering such demands is not a matter for God's Messengers to decide. God's rule that applied to past communities meant that when miracles were given and people continued to disbelieve, they were destroyed. To do this or to cause a scourge to overwhelm people are matters which only God determines. His Messengers have a different duty, which is to bring happy news and to warn: *We send not the ones who are sent, but as ones who give good tidings and as ones who warn. And those who were ungrateful dispute with falsehood in order to refute The Truth by it. And they took My signs to themselves—and what they were warned of—in mockery.* (18:56)

The truth is clear, but the ungrateful resorted to false arguments, trying to disprove the truth. Their attitude was perverted, because even when they demanded miracles or hastened God's punishment, they still did not wish to be convinced. Essentially they were only ridiculing God's revelations and mocking His Messengers.

Who could be more wicked than one who, when reminded of his Lord's revelations, turns away from them and forgets what his own hands have done? Over their hearts We have cast veils which prevent them from grasping the truth, and into their ears, deafness. Even if you call them to the right path, they shall never be guided. *And who does greater wrong than he who was reminded of the signs of his Lord, then, turned aside from them and forgot what his hands put forward? Truly, We laid sheathes on their hearts so that they should not understand it and heaviness in their ears. And if you have called them to the guidance, yet they will not be truly guided ever.* (18:57)

These people who treat what God has bestowed from on high with mockery and who ridicule His warnings cannot understand the Quran or comprehend its message. Therefore, God places over their hearts screens which prevent them from understanding it. In their ears He causes a sort of deafness so that they cannot hear it. He has also willed that, because of their deliberate refusal and wilful turning away from His guidance, they will never be guided. For guidance to penetrate people's hearts, such hearts must be open to receive it in the first place. *And your Lord is Forgiving, Possessor of Mercy. If He were to take them to task for what they earned, He will quicken the punishment for them.* (18:58)

Rather, He gives them respite and allows them time, because He is Kind and Merciful. He wishes to allow them every chance so that they can see the issues clearly. He does not hasten their punishment as they demand. However, He will not abandon them completely and leave them unpunished: *But for them is what they are promised, from*

which they will never find a way to elude it. (18:58) They have a term in this life which they will fulfil. During this time a portion of their punishment will be inflicted on them. And they have a time appointed in the hereafter when whatever they have deserved will be given in full.

They have done wrong and they have been unjust. Therefore, they deserve punishment, or even destruction in the same way as communities of old. However, God in His mercy has determined to give them a chance for the full duration of their term on earth. That is to fulfil a purpose which He, in His wisdom, wishes to be accomplished. Therefore, He treats them differently and allows them respite until the time appointed for them, which they cannot evade:

The same applied to other communities which We destroyed when they persisted in wrongdoing. For We had set a time for their destruction. *And these towns, We caused them to perish when they did wrong and We assigned for their destruction what is promised.* (18:59)

They must not be deluded by the respite they are given. Their time will inevitably come. The rules God has made applicable will never fail, and He does not leave any promise unfulfilled.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Each week, develop a heightened awareness of one of the moral traits that you have studied so far (belief, God-consciousness (*taqwa*) and virtuous conduct (birr). Focus one week on belief, the next on God-consciousness, etc. For example, if you are focusing on God-consciousness for the week, try to notice when you are being forgetful of God in what you do. When you orally express or write out your views (for whatever reason), ask yourself whether you are clear about what you are trying to say. In doing this, of course, focus on four techniques of clarification:

1. Stating what you are saying explicitly and precisely (with careful consideration given to their choice of words),
2. Elaborating on your meaning with other words,

3. Giving examples of what you mean from experiences you have had,
4. Using analogies, metaphors, pictures, or diagrams to illustrate what you mean.

In other words, you will frequently: state, elaborate, illustrate and exemplify their points. You will regularly ask others to do the same.

DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION

When evaluating or developing criteria for evaluation, assess both yourselves and others, noting their tendency to favor yourself. Critical thinkers learn to consistently apply standards of evidence and proof to themselves as well as to others. We practice what we advocate for others. We are able to readily admit any discrepancies and inconsistencies in our own thought and behavior. We are fervent believers in what has been justified by our own thought and experience. We bring together the person we want to be with the person that we are. However, it is not uncommon for many people to be inconsistent in applying their standards once their ego is involved. We cannot become egocentric and overrate the positive traits of people who like us and underrate those who do not. If our ego dominates us, we become blind to our understanding. We promote whatever serves our needs and disregard whatever does not support what we want.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I focused on one moral trait each week and I was able to learn how to internalize them.

QURANIC CHAPTER: THE CAVE (AL-KAHF)
SIGNS 18:60-18:70

Makkah: Book 27: Moses, Joshua and Khidr (18:60)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses, Joshua and Khidr (18:61)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses, Joshua and Khidr (18:62)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses, Joshua and Khidr (18:63)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses, Joshua and Khidr (18:64)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses, Joshua and Khidr (18:65)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses, Joshua and Khidr (18:66)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses, Joshua and Khidr (18:67)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses, Joshua and Khidr (18:68)

Makkah: Book 27: Moses, Joshua and Khidr (18:69)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses, Joshua and Khidr (18:70)

QURANIC CHAPTER: THE CAVE (AL-KAHF) SIGNS 18:71-18:82

Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Khidr (18:71)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Khidr (18:72)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Khidr (18:73)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Khidr (18:74)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Khidr (18:75)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Khidr (18:76)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Khidr (18:77)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Khidr (18:78)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Khidr (18:79)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Khidr (18:80)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Khidr (18:81)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Khidr (18:82)

QURANIC CHAPTER: THE CAVE (AL-KAHF) SIGNS 18:83-18:101

Madinah: Book 28: Dhu 'l Qarnayn (18:83)
Madinah: Book 28: Dhu 'l Qarnayn (18:84)
Madinah: Book 28: Dhu 'l Qarnayn (18:85)
Madinah: Book 28: Dhu 'l Qarnayn (18:86)
Madinah: Book 28: Dhu 'l Qarnayn (18:87)
Madinah: Book 28: Dhu 'l Qarnayn (18:88)
Madinah: Book 28: Dhu 'l Qarnayn (18:89)
Madinah: Book 28: Dhu 'l Qarnayn (18:90)
Madinah: Book 28: Dhu 'l Qarnayn (18:91)
Madinah: Book 28: Dhu 'l Qarnayn (18:92)
Madinah: Book 28: Dhu 'l Qarnayn (18:93)
Madinah: Book 28: Dhu 'l Qarnayn (18:94)
Madinah: Book 28: Dhu 'l Qarnayn (18:95)
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Madinah: Book 28: Dhu 'l Qarnayn (18:97)
Madinah: Book 28: Dhu 'l Qarnayn (18:98)
Madinah: Book 28: Dhu 'l Qarnayn (18:99)
Madinah: Book 28: Dhu 'l Qarnayn (18:100)
Madinah: Book 28: Dhu 'l Qarnayn (18:101)

LESSON 69(7). CRITICAL THINKING MORAL TRAIT EMPOWERING CONSTANCY, COURAGE

HOW DO I DEVELOP COURAGE (DETERMINATION, CONSTANCY)?

In order to develop courage, you need to question what you learn. It takes courage on your part to admit that some ideas are dangerous and lack truth and to be true to your own thinking, questioning beliefs that you hold deeply. Courage is required to not conform to ideas that you know to be false.

It is the primary duty of the believers to participate actively in the struggle for the establishment of a social order based on peace, harmony, and justice: *And fight them until there be no persecution, and the way of life be for God. Then, if they refrained themselves, then, there is to be no deep seated dislike, but against the ones who are unjust. Fight aggression* (2:193) in which everybody is equal before the law, and people in authority work out their policies after ascertaining the views of the people. *And those who responded to their Lord and performed their formal prayer and their affairs are by counsel among themselves, and who spend of what We provided them.* (42:38)

Courage is having a consciousness of the need to face and fairly address ideas, beliefs, or viewpoints toward which you have strong negative emotions and to which you have not given a serious hearing. This courage is connected with the recognition that ideas considered dangerous or absurd are sometimes rationally justified (in whole or in part) and that conclusions and beliefs inculcated in us are sometimes false or misleading.

In this endeavor to realize the moral law in his individual and social life, the human being has often to contend against evil forces represented in the person of Satan. (15:35-15:40) But it is within his power to resist and overcome them. (6:99) Though the human being is always prone to weakness and susceptible to seduction by the forces of evil, yet his weakness is rectifiable under the guidance of revelation, (2:36) and such people as follow the law of God-consciousness shall be immune from these lapses (3:175) or be cowardly in their behavior. (3:122)

HISTORY

This sign: *Say: I am only a mortal like you. It is revealed to me that your God is One, so whoever had been hoping for the meeting with his Lord, let him do with his actions as one in accord with morality and ascribe no partners—in the worship of his Lord, ever* (18:110) was revealed about Judus ibn Zachary al-Amici who said: I do the deed seeking God, but I become happy when other people come to know about it.[5]

The Messenger said to him: God is He, is pure and does not accept except that which is not pure. He does not accept that in which

other than Him is associated. God then revealed this sign (18:110).

A person went to see the Prophet and said: I give alms and keep my ties of kinship and do this only for God. However, when other people mention this and praise me for it, it makes me happy and I like it. The Messenger did not respond to him. Then, God revealed (18:110).[6]

Quartic Chapter: The Cave (al-Kahl)
Signs 18:102-18:110

Malkah: *Assumed ones who were ungrateful*
that they take My servants to themselves as protectors
instead of Me?
Truly, We made hell ready with hospitality
for ones who are ungrateful. (18:102)
Say: Shall We tell you who will be
ones who are losers by their actions? (18:103)
It is those whose endeavoring went astray in this present life
while they assume that they are doing good
by their handiwork. (18:104)
Those were those who were ungrateful for the signs of their Lord
and the meeting with Him so their actions were fruitless.
And so We will not perform for them
on the Day of Resurrection, any weighing. (18:105)
That will be their recompense—hell—
because they were ungrateful
and took to themselves My signs and My Messengers
in mockery. (18:106)
Truly, those who believed and did as ones in accord with morality,
their hospitality had been in the Gardens of Paradise, (18:107)
ones who will dwell in them forever.
They will have no desire for relocation from there. (18:108)
Say: If the sea had been ink for the Words of my Lord,
the sea would come to an end before the Words
of my Lord came to an end
even if We brought about replenishment the like of it. (18:109)
Say: I am only a mortal like you.
It is revealed to me that your God is One,
so whoever had been hoping for the meeting with his Lord,
let him do with his actions as one in accord with morality
and ascribe no partners—
in the worship of his Lord, ever. (18:110)

COMMENTARY°

The chapter concludes with a few signs that bring together its many different lines of discussion in harmonious tone and rhythm. We have here three different aspects which, together, sum up the whole theme of the chapter. The first of these revolves around values and standards as they are reflected in deviant societies and as they truly are. These relate to both actions and people. *Assumed ones who were ungrateful that they take My servants to themselves as protectors instead of Me? Truly, We made hell ready with hospitality for ones who are ungrateful. Say: Shall We tell you who will be ones who are losers by their actions? It is those whose endeavoring went astray in this present life while they assume that they are doing good by their handiwork. Those were those who were ungrateful for the signs of their Lord and the meeting with Him so their actions were fruitless. And so We will not perform for them on the Day of Resurrection, any weighing.* (18:103-18:105)

These are the ones whose loss cannot be exceeded by any human being in history. The answer to this question comes very quickly. *It is those whose endeavoring went astray in this present life while they assume that they are doing good by their handiwork.* (18:104) It did not lead them to follow any proper guidance. It did not yield any real fruit, nor did it achieve any objective. (18:104) This tells how misguided these people are. They have no inclination that whatever they do in this world takes them further into error and is thus completely wasted. Therefore, they continue spending their whole lives in such vain pursuits.

Now the listeners are asked whether they want to know who these people are. The question heightens their curiosity, holding the attentions of everyone within hearing range. Then when everyone eagerly anticipates the information, the identity of these unrivalled losers is revealed: *Those were those who were ungrateful for the signs of their Lord and the meeting with Him so their actions were fruitless. And so We will not perform for them on the Day of Resurrection, any weighing.* (18:105) The linguistic sense imparted by the Arabic term, habitat, describing their actions as 'vain' is derived from a very special case. It is that of an animal feeding on poisonous grass. Its belly is swollen before it dies. The same is the case with the actions of those who are misguided. They grow and seem fair and rewarding, but the fact is that they come to nothing whatsoever. *That will be their recompense—hell—because they were ungrateful and took to themselves My signs and My Messengers in mockery.* (18:106)

Contrast in the scene is given by showing how the believers fare and what their value score is on the true scales used on the Day of Judgment. *Truly, those who believed and did as ones in accord with morality, their hospitality had been in the Gardens of Paradise, ones who will dwell in them forever. They will have no desire for relocation from there.* (18:107-18:108) This abode in the gardens of paradise is contrasted here with the other abode in hell. The gulf between the two is colossal.

There is also here a fine reference to human nature and its appreciation of pleasure and enjoyment. *They will have no desire for relocation from there.* (18:108) We need to reflect a little on this statement which assures us that the believers are to dwell in paradise permanently. By nature however human beings are bored with any state that continues *ad infinitum*. When they are satisfied that the blessings they enjoy are permanent, they are no longer keen to preserve them, seeking changes instead.

The second concluding element shows the limits of human knowledge when compared with God's infinite knowledge. As our imagination cannot reach the absolute, the Quran gives us a simple analogy which we can easily comprehend, using its method of image drawing: *Say: If the sea had been ink for the Words of my Lord, the sea would come to an end before the Words of my Lord came to an end even if We brought about replenishment the like of it.* (18:109) The sea is the largest and richest thing known to humanity. People use ink to write down whatever they want to record. This is how they document their knowledge which they imagine to be great. Therefore, the Quran puts forward the image of the sea with all its vast expanse, but which is now made of ink with which to write down God's words that indicate His knowledge. Even though the whole sea is used, God's words are not finished. At this point another sea of similar magnitude is brought forward, but it too is used in full while God's words are far from finished.

It is with such a clear image and movement that the concept of the infinite is placed before the finite human intellect. A universal and abstract concept remains beyond human conception until it is described in specific terms. No matter how powerful a human being's ability to understand the abstract is, he needs to relate an abstract concept to images and shapes, types and characteristics. This applies to abstract concepts of what is limited or tangible. How then can it fathom what is unlimited and intangible?

Therefore, the Quran gives analogies and draws on similarities in order to give people images and scenes that describe the great con-

cepts it wants them to understand. It often uses what is tangible, and what has shape and definite characteristics and recognizable features in the same way as is employed here. In this example, the sea represents human knowledge which people imagine to be great. But huge and rich as the seas and the oceans may be, they remain limited. God's words, on the other hand, represent His infinite knowledge for which people cannot set any limit. Indeed they cannot receive or record it all, let alone comprehend it.

With such a comparison that shows our knowledge to be extremely limited in relation to God's, the final touch in the chapter paints the highest and noblest degree for us, which is that of recipient of God's final message. This again is something close and finite in relation to the limitless horizon our sight cannot reach: *Say: I am only a mortal like you. It is revealed to me that your God is One, so whoever had been hoping for the meeting with his Lord, let him do with his actions as one in accord with morality and ascribe no partners—in the worship of his Lord, ever.*(18:110)

That is the ultimate horizon of God. How does the horizon of prophethood compare with it, when it is, after all, a human horizon? *Say: I am only a mortal like you. It is revealed to me that your God is One, so whoever had been hoping for the meeting with his Lord, let him do with his actions as one in accord with morality and ascribe no partners—in the worship of his Lord, ever.* (18:110) This is the passport to that splendid meeting.

Thus ends the chapter which began by mentioning revelation and the Oneness of God, utilizing themes and tones that gradually grow more and more profound until they reach this final climax. It is a distinguished beat which generates all the tunes in the splendid music of faith.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QUARTIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

LEARN TO EXPRESS YOUR FEELINGS

Those who have been habitually praised for uncritically accepting others' claims may feel the rug pulled out from under them for a while when expected

to think for themselves. Be emotionally supported in these circumstances and encouraged to express the natural hesitancy, discomfort, or anxiety you may experience so you may work your way through these feelings. A willingness to consider unpopular beliefs develops by degrees. You should exercise discretion beginning first with mildly unpopular rather than with extremely unpopular beliefs. If, during the course of the year, an idea or suggestion which at first sounded 'crazy' was proven valuable, you can later be reminded of it, and discuss it at length, and compare it to other events.

Courage is fostered through a consistently open-minded atmosphere. You should be encouraged to honestly consider or doubt any belief. You who disagree with or doubt your peers should be given support. Raise probing questions regarding unpopular ideas which you have hitherto been discouraged from considering. Model intellectual courage by playing devil's advocate. Why does this idea bother you?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I kept an intellectual journal where I described a situation that was emotionally significant to me, that I deeply cared about.
I responded to the situation and wrote about it in my journal.
I realized what was going on in the situation.
I dug beneath the surface.
I assessed the implications of my analysis.
I learned more about myself.

INTERLUDE 1: ECONOMIC SANCTIONS END

There are various accounts of how the economic sanctions and isolation of the Hashim and Abd al-Muttalib clans came about. We begin with Ibn Ishaq's version:

> The Hashim and the al-Muttalib clans were in the quarters which Quraysh idolaters had agreed upon in the document they wrote, when a number of Quraysh took steps to annul the boycott against them. None took more trouble in this than Hisham ibn Amr for the reason that he was the son of a brother to Nadia ibn Hashim ibn Abd al-Manaf by his mother and was closely attached to the Hashim clan. He was highly esteemed by his people.
>
> I have heard that when these two clans were in their quarter he used to bring a camel laden with food by night and then when he had got it to the mouth of the alley he took off its halter, gave it a whack on the side, and sent it into the alley to them. He would do the same thing another time, bringing clothes for them.
>
> He went to Zuhayr ibn Abu Umayya ibn al-Mughayra whose mother was Atika bint Abd al-Muttalib and said: Are you content to eat food and wear clothes and marry women while you know of the condition of your maternal uncles? They cannot buy or sell, marry, nor give in marriage. By God I swear that if they were the uncles of Abu 'l-Hakam ibn Hisham and you asked him to do what he has asked you to do he would never agree to it.
>
> He said: Confound you, Hisham, what can I do? I'm only one man. By God if I had another man to back me I would soon annul it.
>
> He said: I have found a man. Myself.
>
> He said: Find another as well.
>
> So Hisham went to al-Mutim ibn Adiyy and said: Are you content that two clans of the Abd al-Manaf tribe should perish while you look on consenting to follow the Quraysh? You will find that they will soon do the same with you.
>
> He gave the same reply as Zuhayr and demanded a fourth man, so Hisham went to Abu 'l-Bakhtari ibn Hisham who asked for a fifth man and then to Zamaa ibn al-Aswad ibn al-Muttalib ibn Asad and reminded him of their kinship and duties.
>
> He asked whether others were willing to co-operate in this task and he gave him the names of the others. They all arranged to meet at night on the nearest point of al-Hajun above Mecca, and there they bound themselves to take up the question of the document until they had secured its annulment. Zuhayr claimed the right to act and speak first.

So the next day when the people met together Zuhayr clad in a long robe went round the Kabah seven times; then he came forward and said: O people of Makkah, are we to eat and clothe ourselves while the Hashim perish, unable to buy or sell? By God I will not sit down until this evil boycotting document is torn up!

Abu Jahl, who was at the side of the mosque, exclaimed: You lie by God. It shall not be torn up.

Zamaa said: You are a greater liar. We were not satisfied with the document when it was written. Abu 'l-Bakhtari said: Zamaa is right. We are not satisfied with what is written and we don't hold with it.

Al-Mutim said: You are both right and anyone who says otherwise is a liar. We take God to witness that we dissociate ourselves from the whole idea and what is written in the document.

Hisham spoke in the same sense.

Abu Jahl said: This is a matter which has been decided overnight. It has been discussed somewhere else.

Now Abu Talib was sitting at the side of the mosque. When al-Mutim went up to the document to tear it in pieces he found that worms had already eaten it except the words: In **Your** Name, O God.

The writer of the deed was Mansur ibn Ikrima. It is alleged that his hand shrivelled.

When the deed was torn up and annulled, Abu Talib composed the following verses in praise of those who had taken part in the annulment:

Has not our Lord's doing come to the ears of those
Far distant across the sea (for God is very kind to men),
Telling them that the deed was torn up
And all that was against God's wish had been destroyed?
Lies and sorcery were combined in it,
But sorcery never gets the upper hand.
Those not involved in it assembled together for it in a remote place
While its bird of ill omen hovered within its head.
It was such a heinous offense that it would be fitting
That because of it hands and necks should be severed
And that the people of Makkah should go forth and flee,
Their hearts quaking for fear of evil
And the plowman be left in doubt what to do—
Whether to go down to the lowland or up to the hills—
And an army come up between Makkah's hills
Equipped with bows, arrows, and spears.

He of Makkah's citizens whose power rises
(Let him know) that our glory in Makkah's vale is older.
We grew up there when men were few
And have ever waxed great in honor and reputation.
We feed our guests till they leave a dish untasted
When the hands of the *maysir* players would begin to tremble.
God reward the people in al-Hajun who swore allegiance
To a chief who leads with decision and wisdom,
Sitting by the near side of al-Hajun as though princes,
Nay they are even more noble and glorious.
Every bold man helped therein
Clad in mail so long that it slowed his stride,
Running to portentous deeds
Like a flame burning in the torchbearer's hands.
The noblest of Luayy ibn Ghalib's line
When they are wronged their faces show their anger.
With long cord to his sword half his shank bare.
For his sake the clouds give rain and blessing.
Prince son of prince of princely hospitality
Gathering and urging food on his guests.
Building and preparing safety for the tribesmen
When we walk through the land.
Every blameless man kept this peace.
A great leader, there was he praised.
They accomplished their work in a night
While others slept; in the morning they took their ease.
They sent back Sahl ibn Baida well pleased
And Abu Bakr and Muhammad rejoiced thereat.
When have others joined in our great exploits,
From of old have we shown each other affection?
Never have we approved injustice.
We got what we wanted without violence.
O men of Qusayy, won't you consider,
Do you want what will befall you tomorrow?
For you and I are as the words of the saying:
You have the explanation if you could only speak, O Aswad.

Waqidi's version follows:

The conspiracy of the Quraysh does not weaken the faith of the Muslims. Finally, the death of the children of the Hashim clan and the terrible conditions of the Muslims who had sought refuge in the valley becomes blatantly apparent. A group of those who had signed

the agreement become conscious-struck and want to end the sanctions. Hisham ibn Amr goes to Zahira ibn Umayyah and says: How can you eat food and wear good clothing while your relatives have nothing but rags to wear and they go hungry?

Zahira replies: I cannot break the agreement of the Quraysh alone, but if someone concurs with me, I will tear up the agreement. Hisham says: I concur. Hisham says: We need a third person. Hisham seeks out Mutim ibn Adi and says: I never thought you would agree to allow the two families of Bani Hashim and Makhzum, children of Abd al-Muttalib, which you are honored to be a part of, to remain in such a state. He says: What can I do? I cannot do anything alone. He answers: Two other people concur with you, myself and Zahira. Mutim says: Someone else must also join us as well. Hashim speaks to Abu 'l-Bakhtari ibn Hisham and Zamah ibn Qays. They also agree.

They agree to meet at the Kabah the following day. At that time, Zahira says: Oh people of Makkah. We eat well and dress well, but the children of Hashim are dying. Neither is anything sold to them nor bought from them. I swear by God that we must break this oppressive allegiance. Abu Jahl says: This agreement cannot be broken. Zamah says: We did not want to sign it in the first place. Abu 'l-Bakhtari agrees and says: We do not agree with the pledge and we do not accept it as official.Mutim says: Both of them are speaking the truth and whoever says otherwise is lying. I seek refuge in God from what has been written there. Abu Jahl senses that the affair has been decided previously. He stands up proclaims his refusal to allow it to happen. At that point, Mutim goes to get the document to tear it up. He finds that termites have eaten it all up except the words *bismilla, Allahumma.*

A group goes to the Hashim Clan and informs them they can leave the valley and return to their homes. This occurs in the middle of Rajab, 3 BH/ca. March 8, 619 CE. They had been under economic sanctions in the valley of Abu Talib for ca. 31 months from Muharram 8 AH (ca. September 19, 616 CE) to the middle of Rajab 5 AH (ca. March 8, 619 CE).

During these three years, the vast fortunes of Khadija and Abu Talib had run out. They had to make, as it were, a new beginning in life, by putting their blocks into place—one by one. Ten years had passed since Muhammad had first proclaimed his mission. The boycott of the Quraysh had failed to produce the intended result. The members of these clans were defiant, and their morale was high. It was just as unthinkable for them, at the end of the siege, as it had been at the beginning, to surrender Muhammad to his enemies.

LESSON 70(1). CRITICAL THINKING MORAL TRAIT PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS

WHAT IS PERSEVERANCE?

Perseverance is being willing and conscious of the need to pursue insights and truths despite difficulties, obstacles, and frustrations; a firm adherence to rational principles despite irrational opposition of others; a sense of the need to struggle with confusion and unsettled questions over an extended period of time in order to achieve deeper understanding or insight. This trait is undermined when others continually provide the answers, do your thinking for you or substitute easy tricks, algorithms, and short cuts for careful, independent thought.

WHAT DOES PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS MEAN?

Perseverance in goodness is an attribute of God: *And whatever you have of divine blessing is from God.* (16:53) and, therefore, it becomes the duty of every person to obey his own impulse to good: *And whoever volunteered good, then, truly, God is One Who is Responsive, Knowing.* (2:158) He should do good as God has been good to all: d*o good even as God did good to you* (28:77) and love those who do good: *And do good. Truly, God loves the ones who are doers of good.* (2:195) Believers hasten in every good work. As all prophets were quick in emulating good works, (21:90) so all people are advised to strive together (as in a race) towards all that is good: *Be forward, then, in good deeds.* (2:148) and virtuous. All good things are for the believers; goodly reward in the hereafter and highest grace of God awaits those who are foremost in good deeds: *some of them are ones who take the lead with good deeds by permission of God. That is the greater grace.* (35:32) Believers are advised to repel evil with what is better, for thereby enmity will change into warm friendship: *Drive back with what is fairer. Then, behold he who between you and between him was enmity as if he had been a protector, a loyal friend.* (41:34) It is often reflective in that students have to go back and think about similar problems that they had faced before and re-analyze them. They do not let difficulties, obstacles and frustrations stop them from pursuing truths with their insight (the capacity to gain an accurate and deep intuitive understanding of a person or thing).

QURANIC CHAPTER 16: THE BEE (AL-NAHL)
SIGNS 16:1-16:9

Makkah: *Approached the command of God?*
Seek not to hasten it.
Glory be to Him and exalted is He above partners

they ascribe with God. (16:1)
He sends down the angels with the Spirit of His command
on whom He wills of His servants to warn
that there is no god but I,
so be God-conscious of Me. (16:2)
He created the heavens and the earth with The Truth.
Exalted is He above partners they ascribe. (16:3)
He created the human being from seminal fluid.
That is when he is a clear adversary. (16:4)
And He created the flocks, for you
in which there is warmth and profits and of them you eat (16:5)
and in them is a beauty for you when you give them rest and when
you drive forth flocks to pasture. (16:6)
And they carry your lading to a land, being that which reaches you
not but under adverse circumstances to yourselves.
Truly, your Lord is Gentle, Compassionate. (16:7)
And He creates horses, mules and donkeys for you to ride
and as an adornment. And He creates what you know not. (16:8)
And with God is showing of the way
yet some of them are ones who swerve.
If He willed, He would have guided you one and all. (16:9)

COMMENTARY°

God's judgment is bound to come; so do not seek to hurry it on. Limitless is He in His glory and sublimely exalted above anything people may associate with Him. He sends down angels with this divine inspiration, [bestowed] by His will on such of His servants as He pleases: *Approached the command of God? Seek not to hasten it. Glory be to Him and exalted is He above partners they ascribe with God. He sends down the angels with the Spirit of His command on whom He wills of His servants to warn that there is no god but I, so be God-conscious of Me.* (16:1-16:2)

The ungrateful in Makkah used to ask the Prophet to hasten their punishment in this life, or to hasten the punishment God has in store for them in the life to come. As time passed with no punishment being inflicted, they urged the Prophet more and more to hasten it, demonstrating that they could not care less. They thought that Muhammad was warning them against something that would never happen. His only aim, as they imagined, was to get them to believe what he said and accept his faith. They could not understand God's wisdom in giving them time. Nor could they appreciate His grace. They would not reflect on the signs He has placed everywhere in the

universe around them. Nor would they reflect on His revelations in the Quran which address people's minds and hearts. That is after all a much more effective address than punishment and suffering. It is more worthy of us whom God has honored when He gave him a mind, feelings and an independent will to study, reflect and make free choices.

The opening of the chapter is very decisive. It implies that the command has been given, and that God's will has been made. This is sufficient for the judgment to come to pass at the time appointed for it by God Himself. God's laws operate in accordance with His will. They cannot be hurried, nor can they be postponed to satisfy people's wishes. The statement here tells us that God's judgment, to resurrect people or to inflict His punishment on those who deserve it, has been made. It will come to pass at the time God has determined. There will be no hurrying and no delay.

The decisive nature of this statement is especially effective, even on those who try to wear a careless face. Moreover, it expresses the truth. Whatever God wills is bound to take place. The fact that He has made a judgment means that it is carried out, and that it becomes part of reality. Therefore, there is neither an overstatement of facts nor a deviation from them.

Their beliefs, associating partners with God, and all the false concepts that they formulate on that basis, are far removed from God's true nature: *Approached the command of God? Seek not to hasten it. Glory be to Him and exalted is He above partners they ascribe with God.* (16:1) Beliefs that ascribe divinity to anyone other than God all lack foundation. They are the result of degenerate and disgraceful thinking.

God, who does not abandon humanity to their erring beliefs and baseless concepts, sends down from on high what gives them life and saves them: *He sends down the angels with the Spirit of His command on whom He wills of His servants to warn that there is no god but I, so be God-conscious of Me.* (16:2) This is God's greatest favor and blessing. He not only sends down water from the sky to make the earth quicken and to give physical life, but He also sends down the angels with His divine inspiration. The Arabic expression uses the word *ruh*, which also means 'spirit', for inspiration. This adds connotations of life within people's souls, consciences and feelings, and within society so as to preserve them all from corruption. This is the first thing that God sends down to people from on high, and it is His most important blessing and bounty. God's purest creation, the angels, are sent down to His chosen servants, the prophets, giving

them a message that is summed up in these words: (16:2)

The emphasis here is on God's Oneness, which is the central point of the Quranic faith. It breathes life into people's souls. It is also the parting point between the way which gives life and the way which destroys it. A soul that does not believe in God's Oneness is lost, confused, pulled in all directions by diverse and contradictory concepts and beliefs. It cannot move with its whole being towards a definite goal. Use of the term *ruh* in reference to God's message implies all these. Indeed it provides a fitting reference to them at the beginning of this chapter which speaks of the great variety of God's favors. It is the top of all these blessings, without which all others lose their value. Indeed, we do not make a proper use or derive proper benefit from anything on earth unless our soul comes alive with the great blessing of faith.

The warning is given a special mention so as to appear to be the central point of the message, because the larger part of the chapter speaks about the ungrateful who deny God's blessing, prohibit what God has made lawful, violate their covenant with

God and reject faith altogether. This makes the warning more appropriate at the outset, coupled with a call to fear God and avoid incurring His displeasure.

The chapter then begins to outline the aspects of creation that emphasize the Oneness of the Creator, and the aspects of blessing that confirm that it is God alone who bestows them all. These are revealed in groups that follow one another sequentially, starting with the creation of the heavens and the earth, and moving to the creation of man: *He created the heavens and the earth with The Truth. Exalted is He above partners they ascribe. He created the human being from seminal fluid. That is when he is a clear adversary.* (16:3-16:4)

The truth is at the core of their creation and their existence. Indeed the truth is an essential element in managing their affairs and the affairs of all creation. Nothing is created in vain or idle play. Everything derives its existence on the basis of the truth, and leads eventually to the truth. *He created the heavens and the earth with The Truth. Exalted is He above partners they ascribe.* (16:3) He is exalted above their pagan beliefs and above any creatures they associate with Him. He is indeed the One who has created the heavens and the earth and all beings that live in them. No creature is worthy of being His partner. Indeed He has no partners.

The gulf is so huge between the origin and the end, between the worthless sperm and the person in open contention. *He created the human being from seminal fluid. That is when he is a clear adversary.*

(16:4) He disputes with his Lord and denies Him. He argues about His existence or His Oneness. Yet the way the sign runs leaves no gap between the point of origin, the drop of sperm, and the grown up man engaged in dispute and contention. This shows the contrast to be complete and the gulf too wide. Such brevity is intended for enhanced effect.

Against the expanse of the heavens and the earth we stand out. Therefore, the chapter mentions some of the creation God has made subservient to us, beginning with flocks: *And He created the flocks, for you in which there is warmth and profits and of them you eat and in them is a beauty for you when you give them rest and when you drive forth flocks to pasture. And they carry your lading to a land, being that which reaches you not but under adverse circumstances to yourselves. Truly, your Lord is Gentle, Compassionate. And He creates horses, mules and donkeys for you to ride and as an adornment. And He creates what you know not.* (16:5-16:8)

A proper Quranic conscience is always ready to accept any new remarkable addition to God's creation or to scientific discovery. Over the years many new means of riding and carrying loads have been added, as well as many objects of beauty. None of these were known to people when the Quran was revealed. There will be many more which are unknown to us. The Quran prepares us to accept these without difficulty by stating that God creates things of which you have no knowledge. *And He creates horses, mules and donkeys for you to ride and as an adornment. And He creates what you know not.* (16:8)

Within the context of carriage, riding and traveling to reach certain destinations on earth, the chapter adds other objectives which we can reach by travelling along mental ways. Such is the road to faith, which is a straight way that has no turnings. It does not go beyond the defined goal. There are other ways that do not lead to the same destination. Now God has undertaken to make the way leading to Him clear and well defined. He points it out through the signs He has placed in the universe and through His Messengers: *And with God is showing of the way yet some of them are ones who swerve. If He willed, He would have guided you one and all.* (16:9)

The right path is the straight one which does not bend here or there. It goes directly to its destination, allowing for no deviation. A swerving path may lead away from the destination, or may go beyond it, without stopping at it.

But it has been His will that He creates us with the dual propensity to follow His guidance or to go astray, and to let us choose to

follow either way. Therefore, some people follow the right path and some follow swerving ways. Neither type goes beyond God's will which has determined to allow us free choice.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What was it like to not understand or be able to do it?
How did you come to understand it?
What was that like?
Was it worth it?
Did it seem worth it at the time?
What made you change your mind?

Will the support seem to the reader to justify the conclusion?
Should I change the conclusion, or beef up the support?
What counter-examples or problems would occur to the reader here?
What do I want to say about them?
How am I interpreting my Quranic source?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I chose one moral trait to strive for in one month.
I focused on how I can develop that positive trait in myself.
I recognized that I was becoming defensive when someone tried to point out a deficiency in my thinking.
I owned up to my own ignorance on the moral trait and began to deal with it.

Lesson 70(2). Critical Thinking Moral Trait Empathetic Altruism (*ihsan*)

What is empathetic altruism?

There is yet a higher stage of moral achievement described as selfless concern and love for the welfare of others or altruism (*ihsan*) which signifies performance of moral action in conformity with the moral ideal with the added sense of deep loyalty to the cause of God, done in the most graceful way that is motivated by a unique love for God. Performance of God-conscious actions accompanied by a true faith is only a stage in the moral life of a person which, after several stages, gradually matures into altruism (*ihsan*). Altruism is based on having a deep love for God. Love as a human ideal demands that the human being should love God as the complete embodiment of all moral values above everything else.

Altruism is the belief in or practice of disinterested and selfless concern for the well-being of others. Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another. Empathetic altruism is to believe in an practice a selfless concern for the well-being of others through sharing the feelings of another.

Empathetic altruism is understanding the need to imaginatively put oneself in the place of others to genuinely understand them. Students must recognize their egocentric tendency to identify truth with their immediate perceptions or longstanding beliefs. Empathetic altruism correlates with the ability to accurately reconstruct the viewpoints and reasoning of others and to reason from premises, assumptions, and ideas other than their own. This trait also requires that they remember occasions when they were wrong, despite an intense conviction that they were right, and consider that they might be similarly deceived in a case at hand.

Quranic Chapter 16: The Bee (al-Nahl)
Signs 16:10-16:21

Makkah: *It is He Who caused water*
to descend from heaven
for you to drink from it and from it,
trees wherein you pasture your herds. (16:10)
He caused crops to develop for you with it,
and the olives and the date palms
and the grapevines, and all kinds of fruits.
Truly, in that is a sign for a folk who reflect. (16:11)
And He caused to be subservient to you
the nighttime and the daytime

and the sun and the moon, and the stars,
ones caused to be subservient by His command.
Truly, in that are signs for a folk who are reasonable. (16:12)
And whatever He made numerous for you in
and on the earth of hues, ones that are at variance,
truly, in that is a sign for a folk who recollect. (16:13)
And He it is Who caused the sea to be subservient to you
so that you eat from it succulent flesh
and pull out of it glitter to wear
and you see the boats, ones that plow through the waves,
that you be looking for His grace
and so that perhaps you will give thanks. (16:14)
And He cast on to the earth firm mountains
so that it not vibrate with you and rivers
and roads so that perhaps you will be truly guided (16:15)
and landmarks.
And they are truly guided by the stars. (16:16)
Is, then, He Who creates as he who creates not?
Will you not, then, recollect? (16:17)
And if you try to number the divine blessing of God,
you will not be able to count it.
Truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate. (16:18)
And God knows what you keep secret
and what you speak openly. (16:19)
And those whom you call to other than God,
they created not anything but they are themselves created. (16:20)
They are lifeless, not living.
And they are not aware when they will be raised up. (16:21)

COMMENTARY°

The second group of great signs in God's creation and His unlimited blessings then follow: Water pours down from the sky in accordance with laws that God has placed in nature and set into operation. It is these laws that control the running of such water and bring about its outcome in accordance with God's will. Indeed He initiates every movement and determines every result by a special act of will. The water is mentioned here as an aspect of God's grace. So it has the quality of being suitable for drinking. Its other quality follows: *It is He Who caused water to descend from heaven for you to drink from it and from it, trees wherein you pasture your herds.* (16:10) This reference fits in well with the earlier mention of cattle. It provides harmony between the pasture and cattle. A reference is

also made to plants which serve as food for man, including olives, dates and grapes, and many other types of fruit.

There is certainly a sign: *He caused crops to develop for you with it, and the olives and the date palms and the grapevines, and all kinds of fruits. Truly, in that is a sign for a folk who reflect.* (16:11) in the way God has designed the universe and set its laws so that they fit human life. Man would not have been able to survive on this planet had the laws of nature been unsuitable for his nature and life needs. That we are placed on the surface of the earth has not come about by blind coincidence. Nor is it a matter of coincidence that proportions and relativity between our planet and other planets and stars are as they are, or that climatic conditions are so suitable to support human life and satisfy man's needs and desires.

A third group of signs are then added: *And He caused to be subservient to you the nighttime and the daytime and the sun and the moon, and the stars, ones caused to be subservient by His command. Truly, in that are signs for a folk who are reasonable.* (16:12)

Another aspect of the perfect design of creation and the blessings bestowed on humanity at the same time is the creation of the night, day, sun, moon and stars.

Yet another group of blessings that God bestows on humanity is also mentioned: *And whatever He made numerous for you in and on the earth of hues, ones that are at variance, truly, in that is a sign for a folk who recollect.* (16:13)

We are then alerted to another group of God's creation which is the sea and its animal life. Its water is salty and cannot be used for drinking or irrigation. Yet it includes a fantastic range of blessings that God bestows on humans: *And He it is Who caused the sea to be subservient to you so that you eat from it succulent flesh and pull out of it glitter to wear and you see the boats, ones that plow through the waves, that you be looking for His grace and so that perhaps you will give thanks.* (16:14)

The last group of God's numerous blessings mentioned in this passage refers to different aspects of God's creation: *And He cast on to the earth firm mountains so that it not vibrate with you and rivers and roads so that perhaps you will be truly guided and landmarks. And they are truly guided by the stars.*(16: 15-16:16)

Now that the aspects of creation, blessings and great design have been completed in this first passage of the chapter, a comment follows to emphasize the point at issue, namely the Oneness of God who is sublimely exalted above all those beings people associate as partners with Him:

Is He, then, who creates like one that cannot create? Will you not, then, think? Should you try to count God's blessings, you will never be able to compute them. God is indeed Forgiving, Merciful. God knows all that you keep secret and all that you bring into the open. Those beings that some people invoke beside God cannot create anything; they themselves are created. They are dead, not living, and they do not know when they will be raised back to life. *Is, then, He Who creates as he who creates not? Will you not, then, recollect? And if you try to number the divine blessing of God, you will not be able to count it. Truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate. And God knows what you keep secret and what you speak openly. And those whom you call to other than God, they created not anything but they are themselves created. They are lifeless, not living. And they are not aware when they will be raised up.* (16:17-16:21)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions,** (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Did God prescribe mercy for Himself?
Can you describe a time when you found God's mercy?
How is the Quran a mercy to those who believe?
Who can best phrase this question?
Is there another way to put this question?
What is the advantage of putting the question this way?
How would you put the question?
We can ask questions about questions.

When have you enjoyed helping someone? When not? Why?
Did you help that person?
When is it hard to listen to what someone else has to say? Why?
Have you ever not wanted to share something? Should you have?
Why or why not? If you did not share, why did you not share?
Or: What were you thinking? Why?
Did you know you should not? Or: Did it seem okay at the time? Why?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I recognized that by defining something, I was giving it meaning.
I realized that once I defined something, the meaning then determined how I feel about it, how I act upon it and the implications it had.
I realized that there is often more than one way to define or give meaning to something.
I was able to turn the negatives into positives.
I was able to turn my mistakes into opportunities to learn.
I was able to make a list of five recurrent negative contexts in which I feel frustrated, angry, unhappy or worried.
I identified the definition/meaning in each case that was causing my negative emotions.
I was able to find a positive definition for each and then plan for my new responses as well as new emotions.

LESSON 70(3). CRITICAL THINKING MORAL TRAIT BEING FAIR AND JUST (NOT SELF-SERVING OR EGOCENTRIC)

Developing fairness requires the willingness and consciousness of the need to entertain all viewpoints sympathetically and to assess them with the same moral traits, without reference to one's own feelings or vested interests, or the feelings or vested interests of one's friends, community, or nation. It implies adherence to moral traits without reference to one's own advantage or the advantage of one's group.

The fair and just Quranic critical thinkers work to improve their thinking whenever they can. They want things for themselves, but they aren't selfish. They want to help other people. They want to help make the world better for everyone. They are willing to give things up to help others (when it makes sense to). They don't always have the right answers, but they work to improve their thinking (and actions) over time.

Fairness and justice is a divine attribute and the Quran emphasizes that we should adopt it as a moral ideal. God commands people to be just towards one another: *Say: My Lord commanded me to justice* (7:29); *truly, God commands justice and kindness and giving to one who is a possessor of kinship and He prohibits depravity and ones who are unlawful and insolent. He admonishes you so that perhaps you will recollect.* (16:90); *and I was commanded to be just among you* (42:15), and, in judging between person and person, to judge justly: *And when you gave judgment between humanity, give judgment justly* (4:58) *for He loves those who judge justly.*

All believers stand firmly for justice even if it goes against themselves, their parents, their relatives, without any distinction of rich and poor: *B staunch in equity as witnesses to God even against yourselves or the ones wh are your parents or the nearest of kin, whether you would be rich or poo.* (4:135) God's revelation itself is an embodiment of truth and justice: *Completed was the Word of your Lord in sincerity and justice.* (6:115) It is revealed with the Balance (of right and wrong) so that people may stand forth for justice: *We caused the Book to descend with them and the Balance so that humanity may uphold equity.* (57:25)

The value of justice is absolute and morally binding and the believers are, therefore, warned that they should not let the hatred of some people lead them to transgress the limits of justice or make them depart from the ideal of justice, for justice is very near to piety and righteousness: *Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God and let not that you detest a folk drive you into not dealing justly. Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness.* (5:8)

Justice demands that people should be true in word and deed: *They are the ones who remain steadfast and the ones who are sincere and the ones who are morally obligated and the ones who spend in the way of God and the ones who ask for forgiveness at the breaking of day* (3:17) faithfully observe the contracts which they have made and fulfill all obligations.

HISTORY

The elders of the Quraysh met for consultation. Some of them said: Muhammad is a person of fine argument. If he speaks to a person, he soon gets hold of him. Therefore, select some of your most honorable people, whose lines of ancestry are well known. Let them take their positions at every route into Makkah, at one or two day's distance, so that they turn away anyone who comes to meet Muhammad. People did just that. If any of them met a person sent by his people to find out about Muhammad, he would introduce himself to him, telling him his position among his people. He would then offer to tell him about the Prophet, saying: He is a liar who has been followed only by slaves and ignorant people, and those who are good for nothing. All wise men among his people have taken a clear stand against him. This would be enough to turn many people away. It is to this that God refers in the sign stating: *And when it is said to them: What is that your Lord caused to descend, they would say: Fables of the ancient ones!* (16:24)

On the other hand, if the person sent to find out about the Prophet is one to whom God has given insight, he would say: I am certainly a bad intelligence gatherer if, having reached so close, I am to return now without meeting this man and listening to what he says in order to give my people a true picture of him. He would insist on going into Makkah, where he would meet the believers and where they would tell him that all that Muhammad says is good and fine.

This was a well orchestrated propaganda campaign mounted by the Quraysh against the Quranic message. A similar campaign is organized in every generation by arrogant people who do not wish to submit to the truth despite all the evidence supporting it. Indeed the arrogant among the Quraysh were not the first to deny the truth or to scheme against it. The chapter draws for them a picture of the fate suffered by schemers before them, and their destiny in the hereafter. It shows them what they endure from the moment their souls part with their bodies until they receive their punishment in the life to come. All this is depicted in vivid images, following the inimitable style of the Quran.[7]

QURANIC CHAPTER 16: THE BEE (AL-NAHL)
SIGNS 16:22-16:25

Makkah: *Your God is One God.*
But for those who believe not in the world to come,
their hearts are ones that know not
and they are ones who grow arrogant. (16:22)

Without a doubt God knows
what they keep secret and what they speak openly.
Truly, He loves not the ones who grow arrogant. (16:23)
And when it is said to them:
What is that your Lord caused to descend,
they would say: Fables of the ancient ones! (16:24)
They will carry their own heavy loads, that which is complete,
on the Day of Resurrection, and of the heavy loads of whomever
they cause to go astray without knowledge.
How evil is what they will bear! (16:25)

COMMENTARY°

The first passage of this chapter outlined a great many aspects of God's marvellous creation and His blessings which He bestows on His servants, and His knowledge of what is open and what is secret. The other beings which the ungrateful allege to have a share of divinity do not create anything; indeed they themselves are created. They are devoid of knowledge, dead and unlikely ever to come to life. They do not know when their servants are resurrected in order to face the reckoning. This clearly shows that they cannot be deities worthy of worship. Indeed it shows that all beliefs based on a multiplicity of deities are false. This was the first issue raised by the chapter in connection with the question of God's Oneness, with an added reference to the question of resurrection.

The present passage picks up where the last one left off, starting a new round which begins with a clear statement of God's Oneness. It makes clear that those who do not believe in the Day of Judgement have hearts that are hardened in their denial of the truth. Blindness has become an essential characteristic that prevents them from admitting the truth to which signs clearly testify. Their arrogance stops them from acknowledging what they feel to be the truth and accepting its message. The passage concludes with a touching scene in which we see all shadows prostrating themselves, together with every living thing in the heavens and earth, as well as the angels, to God. These are free of arrogance. They fear God and obey His command without dissent. This scene of complete obedience contrasts with that of the hardened ungrateful arrogantly denying the truth at the beginning of the passage.

In between these two scenes, the chapter reports what the arrogant ungrateful say about revelations and about the Quran. They allege that all this is merely fables of the ancients. It also reports their claims about the reasons for their associating partners with God, their

prohibition of what God has made lawful, alleging that God wants them to do what is evil and that He accepts it from them. It quotes their assertions about resurrection and judgment, as they emphatically swear that God does not bring back to life anyone who has died. It answers all their claims, portraying them as they face their death, and as they are brought back to life disclaiming their false assertions.

The chapter also paints scenes of the fate of earlier communities which denied the truth like the ungrateful do. It warns them against being seized by God at any moment of the day or night, when they are totally unaware, either moving around on earth, or feeling apprehensive, expecting God's punishment to overwhelm them. In this passage the chapter also reports what the believers say, and what they expect when they are gathered to God, and what awaits them of goodly reward on the Day of Judgement. The passage concludes with a scene of total serenity and complete obedience demonstrated by all, including shadows, living creatures and angels, in heaven and on earth. *Your God is One God. But for those who believe not in the world to come, their hearts are ones that know not and they are ones who grow arrogant. Without a doubt God knows what they keep secret and what they speak openly. Truly, He loves not the ones who grow arrogant.* (16:22-16:23)

The chapter provides a clear link between believing in God's Oneness and believing in the Day of Judgment. Indeed it makes the one evidence for the other, as worshipping God alone is closely associated with belief in resurrection and reward. It is in the hereafter that God's wisdom and justice are clearly and fully manifested.

All that the chapter has outlined of great signs of creation and blessing, and also of the signs of His perfect knowledge, lead to this clear truth. A truth with manifest effects seen in the harmony and complementarity of the laws of nature governing the universe.

Those who reject this great truth, and do not believe in the hereafter, are not short of proof and evidence. The fault lies rather with them and their own hardened natures. Their hearts persistently deny the very signs they see. They are arrogant, unwilling to accept clear evidence, submit to God, and believe in His Messenger.

God who has created them knows this. Indeed He knows what they keep secret and what they do and say in the open, and He does not like what He knows of them. They are full of arrogance. *Without a doubt God knows what they keep secret and what they speak openly. Truly, He loves not the ones who grow arrogant.* (16:23) An arrogant nature is unlikely to be convinced or to submit to the truth. It is their arrogance that makes them unloved by God.

Those arrogant people with hardened, unresponsive hearts are asked, What has your Lord bestowed from on high? *And when it is said to them: What is that your Lord caused to descend, they would say: Fables of the ancient ones!* (16:24) But they do not give the direct and normal answer, quoting some signs from the Quran or stating their import without distortion to prove their honest reporting even though they may not believe in it. They give instead a dishonest answer, saying: *Fables of the ancient ones*! (16:24) A fable is defined as a story not founded on fact, a legend or myth. Thus do they describe the Quran which addresses minds and souls, deals with life situations, human behavior, social interactions as well as people's conditions, past, present and future. They only describe it as such because it relates some parts of the history of earlier communities. Their denial of the truth thus leads them to bear the burden of their own sins, as well as a portion of the burdens of those whom they lead astray, preventing them from believing in God and the Quran, keeping them unaware of its truth and nature. The Quran describes these sins as heavy burdens. Indeed, they are foul burdens. They weigh heavily on people's souls like loads weigh heavily on their backs. They trouble hearts like burdens trouble the body. Indeed they are worse and even more troublesome than physical burdens, heavy as these may be. *They will carry their own heavy loads, that which is complete, on the Day of Resurrection, and of the heavy loads of whomever they cause to go astray without knowledge. How evil is what they will bear!* (16:25)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Clearly identify the assumptions the Quranic signs express and determine whether they show a sense of justice.

Consider how these assumptions are shaping your point of view.

Assumptions are beliefs you take for granted.

If this was the evidence, and this the conclusion, what was assumed?

Or: If this is what he saw (heard, etc.), and this is what he concluded?

Or thought, what did he assume?

Why do people assume this?
Have you ever made this assumption?
What could be assumed instead?
Is this belief true? Sometimes true? Seldom true? Always false? (give examples.)
Can you think of reasons for this belief? Against it?
What, if anything, can we conclude about this assumption?
What would we need to find out to be able to judge it?
How would someone who makes this assumption act?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I found that sometimes I am not fair-minded.
I was able to contrast the reasoning of a believer and an ungrateful person based on Quranic signs.
I gained insight into fair-mindedness and developing a sense of justice when I considered multiple points of view.

Lesson 70(4). Critical Thinking Strategy
Developing One's Perspective: Creating or Exploring Arguments

Uncritical thinkers who exhibit selfishness similar to the ungrateful around Prophet Muhammad tended to assume that their own view of things was the only correct way to see the world. They tried to manipulate the views of others to their own advantage.

Fair-minded Quranic thinkers are like our beloved Prophet who followed the way of Prophet Abraham. Prophet Abraham recognized that his own way of thinking and interpreting the world around him required insight and experience through trial and error. He went through a critical analysis of his experience. He questioned the commonly held belief of the people around him. For his part, he explored his own beliefs and his own reasoning and theories. This was essential to his thinking and behavior. Once he experienced this, he was certain of his perspectives and could speak about them with deep insight.

Quranic Chapter 16: The Bee (al-Nahl)
Signs 16:26-16:34

Makkah: *Surely, those who were before them planned, then, God*
approached their structures
from the foundations
and the roof fell down upon them from above
and the punishment approached them
from where they are not aware. (16:26)
Again, on the Day of Resurrection He will cover them
with shame and will say: Where are My ascribed associates
with whom you had been making a breach with them?
Those who were given the knowledge will say:
Truly, degradation this Day
and evil upon the ones who are ungrateful. (16:27)
Those whom the angels call to themselves
while they are ones who are unjust to themselves.
Then, they will give a proposal of surrender:
We had not been doing any evil.
Yea! Truly, God is Knowing of what you had been doing. (16:28)
So enter the doors of hell—ones who will dwell in it forever;
and, certainly, it will be a miserable place of lodging.
It is for the ones who increase in pride! (16:29)
And when it was said to those who were God-conscious:
What is it that your Lord caused to descend?
They will say: Good or for those who did good in the present,

there is benevolence. And the abode of the world to come is better.
And how excellent will be the abode
of the ones who are God-conscious! (16:30)
Gardens of Eden which they will enter beneath which rivers run.
They have in them all that they will.
Thus, God gives recompense
to the ones who are God-conscious. (16:31)
Those whom the angels call to themselves
while they are ones who are good.
They say to them: Peace be unto you!
Enter the Garden because of what you had been doing. (16:32)
Look they not on but that the angels approach them
or the command of you Lord approach?
Thus, accomplished those before them.
And God did not wrong them.
Rather, they had been doing wrong to themselves. (16:33)
Then, their evil deeds lit on them for what their hands did.
And surrounded them is what they had been ridiculing. (16:34)

COMMENTARY°

Those who lived before them also schemed. But God struck their edifice at its foundation, and its roof fell in upon them from above, and suffering befell them from where they did not perceive. *Surely, those who were before them planned, then, God approached their structures from the foundations and the roof fell down upon them from above and the punishment approached them from where they are not aware. Again, on the Day of Resurrection He will cover them with shame and will say: Where are My ascribed associates with whom you had been making a breach with them? Those who were given the knowledge will say: Truly, degradation this Day and evil upon the ones who are ungrateful. Those whom the angels call to themselves while they are ones who are unjust to themselves. Then, they will give a proposal of surrender: We had not been doing any evil. Yea! Truly, God is Knowing of what you had been doing. So enter the doors of hell—ones who will dwell in it forever; and, certainly, it will be a miserable place of lodging. It is for the ones who increase in pride!* (16:26-16:29)

The chapter paints their scheming as though it was a building with foundations, corners, ceiling and roof, which implies that it was a massive and well designed plot. But nothing can stand up to God's might: *Surely, those who were before them planned, then, God approached their structures from the foundations.* (16:26) This paints

a picture of total destruction, overtaking them from beneath their feet and above their heads. The foundations supporting the building collapse, and the roof falls down burying them. *And the roof fell down upon them from above and the punishment approached them from where they are not aware.* (16:26) Thus the building they very carefully constructed to provide them with shelter becomes their burial ground as they are overwhelmed from every direction. Little did they think that what they built for shelter would become the instrument of their own destruction.

The image we have here is one of complete destruction. This is the perfect irony directed at those who scheme and plot against God's message, believing that their scheming is too strong and elaborate to ever be foiled. But God's own scheming is far too weighty for them to oppose. This scene is often repeated. The Quraysh were not the first to take this stand, nor would they be the last. On the other hand, God's message goes on along its clear way, no matter what the plotters devise. People turn around from time to time, and they see that highly effective scene portrayed by the Quran: *Surely, those who were before them planned, then, God approached their structures from the foundations and the roof fell down upon them from above and the punishment approached them from where they are not aware.* (16:26)

All this takes place in the present life on earth. But there is something else beyond: *Again, on the Day of Resurrection He will cover them with shame and will say: Where are My ascribed associates with whom you had been making a breach with them?* (16:27) This is now a scene of the hereafter, where we see the plotters stand up in shame, and when their arrogance and scheming is no longer of any use to them. They stand in front of the One to whom all creation and all authority belong. He will rebuke them, asking: You were keen to dispute with My Messenger and his followers who acknowledged My Oneness, claiming that your false deities were My partners. Where are they now?

In their shame and humiliation, they will remain silent. On the other hand, those endowed with knowledge, angels, Messengers and true believers, whom God permits to speak, will say plainly and forcefully: *Those who were given the knowledge will say: Truly, degradation this Day and evil upon the ones who are ungrateful.* (16:27)

Now they are taken a step backwards, and described at the moment they face death. *Those who were given the knowledge will say: Truly, degradation this Day and evil upon the ones who are ungrate-*

ful. Those whom the angels call to themselves while they are ones who are unjust to themselves. Then, they will give a proposal of surrender: We had not been doing any evil. Yea! Truly, God is Knowing of what you had been doing. (16:27-16:28) The angels are gathering their souls which they themselves have wronged by depriving themselves of the light and reassurance of faith. By their own actions they have brought about their own ruin, and now they have to suffer punishment in hell.

The chapter paints their position at the moment of their death, when they are still close to earth and to all the falsehood they asserted here, and all their evil scheming: *Those whom the angels call to themselves while they are ones who are unjust to themselves. Then, they will give a proposal of surrender: We had not been doing any evil. Yea! Truly, God is Knowing of what you had been doing.* (16:28) Those who used to revel in their arrogance are now submissive, unable to contend. They offer complete submission! But at the same time they lie. This may be an aspect of their plotting in this life.

Yet the answer comes to them straightaway from God who knows their true reality: *Then, they will give a proposal of surrender: We had not been doing any evil. Yea! Truly, God is Knowing of what you had been doing.* (16:28) There is no room now for lies or deception. They have to suffer the fate of all arrogant peoples who deny the truth: *So enter the doors of hell—ones who will dwell in it forever; and, certainly, it will be a miserable place of lodging. It is for the ones who increase in pride* (16:29)

On the other side stand the God-conscious. Their picture contrasts fully with that of the arrogant ungrateful, in origin and destiny: *And when it was said to those who were God-conscious: What is it that your Lord caused to descend? They will say: Good or for those who did good in the present, there is benevolence. And the abode of the world to come is better. And how excellent will be the abode of the ones who are God-conscious! Gardens of Eden which they will enter beneath which rivers run. They have in them all that they will. Thus, God gives recompense to the ones who are God-conscious. Those whom the angels call to themselves while they are ones who are good. They say to them: Peace be unto you! Enter the Garden because of what you had been doing.* (16:30-16:32)

The God-conscious realize that the very essence of the divine message and all that God has revealed of directives, commandments and laws is good and perfect. Therefore, when they are questioned about what God has revealed from on high, they sum it up in a word: *And when it was said to those who were God-conscious: What is it*

that your Lord caused to descend? (16:30) They enjoy a good life and have a good position. It is certainly better than all there is in this present life. *They will say: Good or for those who did good in the present, there is benevolence. And the abode of the world to come is better. And how excellent will be the abode of the ones who are God-conscious!* (16:30) More details are now given about this abode of the hereafter, which is shown to be a goodly one indeed: (16: 31) In such a place and with such resources they have comforts and luxuries in abundance. *Gardens of Eden which they will enter beneath which rivers run.* (16:31) They will want for nothing. Every good thing is provided without any limit on what God grants them. *They have in them all that they will. Thus, God gives recompense to the ones who are God-conscious.* (16:31)

Again the chapter takes a step backwards to show the God-fearing believers as they are about to die. It is an easy scene, as they are comforted by the angels: *Those whom the angels call to themselves while they are ones who are good.* (16:32) They are in a comfortable, pure condition, looking forward to meeting God, having nothing to fear. The angels greet them: *They say to them: Peace be unto you! Enter the Garden because of what you had been doing.*(16:32)

At the end of this scene with its two aspects of death and resurrection, the chapter queries what the idolaters of the Quraysh are waiting for? Are they waiting for the angels to gather their souls, or for God's command to resurrect them? For this is what happens to them on death and then on the day when resurrection takes place by God's command. Yet they have a clear lesson in what happened to earlier communities. They have been shown two images delineating what happens to both parties:

Are they [who disbelieve] awaiting anything but for the angels to appear before them, or for your Lord's command to come? Those before them did the same. It was not God who wronged them, but it was they who wronged themselves. The evil consequences of their misdeeds overtook them, and they were overwhelmed by the very thing they used to deride. *Look they not on but that the angels approach them or the command of your Lord approach? Thus, accomplished those before them. And God did not wrong them. Rather, they had been doing wrong to themselves. Then, their evil deeds lit on them for what their hands did. And surrounded them is what they had been ridiculing.* (16:33-16:34)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What is the difference between important and trivial?
What are his people like? What kinds of people are there?
What is the difference between right and wrong?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:
I followed the following guidelines:

Arrive on time for class.
Teachers do not take lateness lightly.
Position yourself in the classroom to focus on the subject matter; consider the best location for:

listening
asking questions
seeing visual materials
discussing—not only with the teacher but also your classmates

LESSON 70(5). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL STANDARD LOGIC (BEING REASONABLE)

Logic is a word that has many meanings and uses:

1) Correct reasoning or the study of correct reasoning and its foundations.
2) The relationships between propositions (supports, assumes, implies, contradicts, counts against, is relevant to).
3) The system of principles, concepts, and assumptions that are the basis for Quranic Studies.
4) Reasoning that bears upon the truth or justification of any belief or set of beliefs.
5) Reasoning that bears upon an answer to any question or set of questions.

The word logic relates to the question of explanation. As human thought and behavior is to some extent based on logic rather than instinct, we try to figure things out using ideas, meanings, and thought. Such intellectual behavior inevitably involves logic or considerations of a logical sort: some sense of what is relevant and irrelevant, of what supports and what counts against a belief, of what we should and should not assume, of what we should and should not claim, of what we do and do not know, of what is and is not implied, of what does and does not contradict, of what we should or should not do or believe.

Concepts have a logic in that we can investigate the conditions under which they do and do not apply, of what is relevant or irrelevant to them, of what they do or don't imply, etc. Questions have a logic in that we can investigate the conditions under which they can be settled. Quranic Studies has logic in that the Quran has purposes and a set of logical structures that bear upon those purposes: assumptions, concepts, issues, data, theories, claims, implications, consequences, etc.

The concept of logic also plays an essential role in critical thinking. Unfortunately, it takes a considerable length of time before most people become comfortable with its many uses. In part, this is due to people's failure to study their own thinking in keeping with the standards of reason and logic. This is not to deny, of course, that logic is involved in all human thinking. It is rather to say that the logic we use is often implicit, unexpressed, and sometimes contradictory.

According to the Quran to be logical is to be "reasonable" (*'aqala*), to use one's intellect (*'aql*). This course in Quranic Studies is to learn from Quranic logic. Events described in the Quran do not just happen. The sacred text's description of events make sense when you understand its meaning.

Questions should be asked with a method to them. Teachers should help students figure out the logic behind the sign (*ayah*) or signs (*ayat*). Their an-

swers should always reference particular Quranic signs. How they learn to support their answers by giving reasons and references to the sign(s) is important, not any specific answer that they give.

In many cases, Quranic learning has been through rote memorization and drills based on having memorized the signs. When students learn through this method, they are not logically informed as to what the Quranic signs are saying. They are learning only by association or rote memorization without connecting the revelation to how they think or how they chose to live their life. As a result, students learn to think of the Quranic text as something they simply memorize without ever understanding the meaning of what it says. In doing so, they do not integrate the meanings of the Quranic message into their lives, they do not "own" it. They rarely relate, that is, make relevant, what they have memorized to their own experience nor are they able to critique each by means of the other. They rarely try to test by making it a part of their everyday life. They rarely ask questions such as:

> Why is this so? How does this relate to what I already know?
> How does this relate to what I am learning in other classes?

With the method of memorization of the sacred text, very few students ever think that they need to implement what they are learning in their life nor have they learned how to do so.

The Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge mixed with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression (*al-tafaqquh fi 'l-din*), that is, "understands the religion." This means as a reasonable approach filled with curiosity to constructing a worldview of Islam. Islam, in other words, advises knowledge through analysis and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely rigid and authoritarian approach that teaches blind certainty and a closed-mindedness that results in an imprisonment of the mind so complete that the prisoner does not even know that his or her mind has been imprisoned. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions: Faith based on detailed analysis (*al-iman al-tafsilli*) as opposed to undigested and uncomprehended faith (*al-iman al-ijmali*). The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the clerics of all the leading schools of thought.[8]

QURANIC CHAPTER 16: THE BEE (AL-NAHL)
SIGNS 16:35-16:40

Makkah: *And those who ascribed partners*

with God said:
If God willed neither
would we have worshiped other than Him anything,
we nor our fathers,
nor would we have held sacred anything
other than what He forbade.
Thus, accomplished those who were before them.
Then, what is upon the Messengers,
but the delivering of the clear message? (16:35)
And, certainly, We raised up in every community a Messenger
saying that: Worship God and avoid false deities.
Then, of them were some whom God guided
and of them were some upon whom their fallacy was realized.
So journey through the earth;
then, look on how had been the Ultimate End
of the ones who deny. (16:36)
If you be eager for their guidance,
then, truly, God will not guide whom He causes to go astray.
And they will have no ones who help. (16:37)
And they swore by God their most earnest oaths:
God will not raise up him who dies.
Yea! It is a promised obligation upon Him
—except most of humanity knows not— (16:38)
in order to make manifest for them
about what they are at variance in it
and so that those who were ungrateful know
that they had been ones who lie. (16:39)
Our saying to a thing when We wanted it
is that We say to it: Be! Then, it is! (16:40)

COMMENTARY°

Now the chapter reports yet another argument advanced by the ungrateful, to explain the reasons for their disbelief. *And those who ascribed partners with God said: If God willed neither would we have worshiped other than Him anything, we nor our fathers, nor would we have held sacred anything other than what He forbade. Thus, accomplished those who were before them. Then, what is upon the Messengers, but the delivering of the clear message? And, certainly, We raised up in every community a Messenger saying that: Worship God and avoid false deities. Then, of them were some whom God guided and of them were some upon whom their fallacy was realized. So journey through the earth; then, look on how had been the*

Ultimate End of the ones who deny. (16:35-16:36)

God's will is never directed so as to make His servants associate partners with Him. Nor is He ever pleased when they prohibit what He has made lawful. This is clearly stated in His law contained in His messages to humanity. The Messengers were only assigned the task of delivering His message, and they were up to the task, exerting their best efforts to fulfil it: *And, certainly, We raised up in every community a Messenger saying that: Worship God and avoid false deities.* (16:36) This is the command He issued, outlining what He wishes His servants to do. God Almighty does not order His servants to do something which He knows them to be, by nature, unable to do, or to do what He has compelled them to avoid. The clear evidence proving His displeasure with those who disobey His orders is the punishment which He inflicted in former times on those who denied His messages and Messengers. Therefore, He draws attention here to the fate of those disobedient communities: *So journey through the earth; then, look on how had been the Ultimate End of the ones who deny.* (16:36)

Some people respond positively to God's message:*Then, of them Aware some whom God guided* (16:36) Another group chose error: *and of them were some upon whom their fallacy was realized.* (16:36) Neither party has broken away from God's will for He did not compel them to follow one way or the other. Each chose the way for himself after having been given sufficient guidance to distinguish between truth and error. Such guidance is placed within us and is also made available everywhere in the universe around us.

This statement also refutes the false argument advanced by the idolaters and repeated by many of those who commit every kind of disobedience of God. The Quranic message is very clear on this point. God orders His servants to do only what is right and good, and He forbids them only what is evil. He may sometimes choose to inflict clear punishments which plainly reflect His displeasure. But this does not mean that He intervenes to compel them to go astray and then punishes them for something over which they claim to have no choice. This is absolutely false. They are completely free to follow the way they choose, and that freedom is given them by God's will. Whatever good or evil they do, then, takes place by God's will in this sense only.

This explains the comment given in the form of an address to the Prophet outlining the law determining what people may follow of guidance or error: *If you be eager for their guidance, then, truly, God will not guide whom He causes to go astray. And they will have*

no ones who help. (16:37) People's acceptance of divine guidance is not the result of the Prophet's deliberations and efforts. This is not his task. His mission is only to deliver the message God gave him. Guidance and error are subject to God's law which never fails, bringing the same results every time. Whoever deserves to remain in error according to God's law shall not receive His guidance. That is because of the operation of the laws God has set in nature. This is His will which is always done. Therefore, "they shall have none to support them." Besides, who can support them against God?

The ungrateful make yet another argument to justify their rejection of the divine message. *And they swore by God their most earnest oaths: God will not raise up him who dies. Yea! It is a promised obligation upon Him—except most of humanity knows not—in order to make manifest for them about what they are at variance in it and so that those who were ungrateful know that they had been ones who lie. Our saying to a thing when We wanted it is that We say to it: Be! Then, it is!* (16:38-16:40)

The question of resurrection has been the main point of contention among many communities ever since God sent His Messengers to humanity, commanding them to do what is good and forbidding them what is evil, warning them always that they are accountable for their deeds before God on the Day of Judgment.

Yet these people from the Quraysh were ready to solemnly swear that God will not raise anyone to life after death. In other words, they acknowledge God's existence but deny that the dead will be brought back to life by Him. They consider such resurrection to be impossible after bodies have decomposed, organs separated and molecules are scattered everywhere. They overlook the miraculous nature of life in the first place. They are oblivious to the nature of God's power and the fact that it cannot be compared with that of human beings or their abilities. They do not realize that to bring anything into existence does not trouble God in any way, and does not place any burden whatsoever on His power. It is sufficient for Him to decide to bring something into existence for that thing to exist.

Human beings are also oblivious of God's purpose behind resurrection. The fact is that nothing reaches its fullness in this life. People differ on truth and falsehood, right and error, good and evil, etc. Their differences and disputes cannot be settled or reach the right conclusion in this life on earth. It is a matter of God's will that some of them live long, and that they are not held to account for their deeds during this life. Thus, reward and punishment are administered in the hereafter when everything reaches its fullness.

The chapter replies to the ungrateful' assertion that the dead will not be resurrected. It dispels people's doubts with an emphatic assertion: *And they swore by God their most earnest oaths: God will not raise up him who dies.* (16:38) When God makes a promise, then that promise is fulfilled without fail. *Yea! It is a promised obligation upon Him—except most of humanity knows not.* (16:38) People are rarely aware of the true nature of a promise made by God.

The whole thing has a definite purpose: *In order to make manifest for them about what they are at variance in it and so that those who were ungrateful know that they had been ones who lie.* (16:39) They lie when they allege that their methods are based on true guidance, when they accuse God's Messengers of lying, and when they deny the life to come and entertain concepts and beliefs that are false and lack basis. Besides, resurrection is so easy: *Our saying to a thing when We wanted it is that We say to it: Be! Then, it is!* (16:40)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What does it mean to be a monotheist?
What does it mean to be reasonable?
How would explain these signs to someone else?
Does what you say follow from the evidence that the signs give?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to relate the content of the above signs to practical situations in my life.

I knew that I had connected the Quranic message when I was able to tell someone in my own words what this sign says.

INTERLUDE 2: DEATHS OF KHADIJA AND ABU TALIB

THE DEATH OF KHADIJA

In a few months he was visited by trials more severe than any that had yet befallen him. The tenth year (third before the migration) had just begun when Khadija died; and five weeks later he lost his protector Abu Talib.[9] The death of his wife was a grievous affliction. For twenty-five years she had been his counselor and support. Now his heart and home were desolate. His family, however, no longer needed maternal care. The daughters had all left him for their husbands' homes, excepting the youngest, Fatima, who was approaching womanhood.

Although the custom of the country allowed polygamy, yet Muhammad was during her lifetime restrained from other marriages by affection and gratitude. His grief at her death at first was inconsolable, liable as he was to violent and deep emotion.

THE LOSS OF ABU TALIB

When the patriarch felt that life was ebbing, he summoned his brothers, the sons of Abd al-Muttalib, around his bed; commended his nephew to their protection; and, relieved of the trust, died in peace, and was buried near Khadija's grave. Muhammad wept as he followed the bier, and not without reason. For forty years Abu Talib had been his faithful friend, the prop of his childhood, the guardian of his youth, and in later life, a very tower of defence. So long as he lived, Muhammad needed not to fear violence or attach. But there was no strong hand now to protect him from his foes.

ABU LAHAB PROTECTS MUHAMMAD FOR A LITTLE

Grieved and dispirited by these bereavements following so closely one upon the other, and dreading the now unchecked insolence of the Quraysh, Muhammad seldom left Makkah. The dying behest of Abu Talib had now an expected effect; for Abu Lahab, heretofore the avowed enemy of Muhammad, was softened by his despondency and distress, and spontaneously became his guardian.

Do, he said, as you did when Abu Talib was yet alive. By Al-Lat! no one will hurt you while I live.

But the pledge was not long observed, for Abu Lahab was soon gained back again by the ungrateful Quraysh, and became his enemy more determined than before. At first, indeed, he was rather praised by the Quraysh for his attempt to bind up family differences. But, asked by Abu Jahl to ask where Abd al-Muttalib now was, and on the Prophet confessing that he was in the place of the lost, Abu Lahab left him in indignation saying: I will not cease to be your enemy forever. So he did not remain.[10] The embittered relations between Abu Lahab and his nephew, nothwithstanding that two of his his sons

had promised to marry daughters of Muhammad, but this possible relationship was dissolved with the revelation of Chapter 111.

The indignities the Prophet suffered at this time evince the hostile attitude of the city. On one occasion the populace cast dirt upon his head. (It is uncertain when this incident occurred.[1] Returning home in this plight, his daughter, Fatima, rose to wipe it off, and as she did so, wept. Muhammad seeing it, comforted her and said: My daughter, weep not! for verily the Lord will be your father's helper. It is added that he suffered no such indignity as that while Abu Talib lived.

His position indeed was now becoming critical. He must either gain the ascendancy at Makkah, abandon his prophetical claims, or else perish in the struggle. Islam must destroy idolatry, or idolatry destroy Islam. Things could not remain as they were. His followers, though devotedly attached, and numbering some once influential citizens, were but a handful against a host besides, the greater part of them were now in Abyssinia. Open hostilities, notwithstanding every endeavor to prevent them, might any day precipitate the struggle, and irretrievably ruin his cause. The new faith had not recently been gaining ground at Makkah. There had been no conversions, none at least of any note, since those of Umar and Hamza three or four years before. A few more years of similar discouragement, and his chance of success was gone.

HISTORY

Ibn Ishaq's version:

Khadija and Abu Talib both died in this year (3 BH/619CE). With Khadija's death troubles followed fast on each other's heels, for she had been a faithful support to him in Islam, and he used to tell her of his troubles.

With the death of Abu Talib he lost a strength and stay in his personal life and a defense and protection against his tribe. After the death of Abu Talib, the ungrateful Quraysh began to treat him in an offensive way which they would not have dared to follow in his uncle's lifetime. In a few months he was visited by trials more severe than any that had yet befallen him.A young lout actually threw dust on his head.

Hisham on the authority of his father, Urwa, told me that when this happened, the Messenger went into his house with the dust still on his head and his daughter, Fatima, got up to wash it away, weeping as she did so. He said: Don't weep, my little girl for God will protect your father.

Meanwhile he was thinking: The Quraysh never treated me thus while Abu Talib was alive.

When Abu Talib fell ill and Quraysh learned of his grave condi-

tion they reminded one another that now that Hamza and Umar had accepted Islam and Muhammad's reputation was known among all the Quraysh clans, they had better go to Abu Talib and come to some compromise lest they be robbed of their authority altogether.

Al-Abbas ibn Abd Allah ibn Mabad ibn Abbas, from one of his family from Ibn Abbas, told me that Utba and Shayba, sons of Rabia, and Abu Jahl and Umayya ibn Khalaf and Abu Sufyan with sundry other notables went to Abu Talib and said: You know your rank with us and now that you are at the point of death we are deeply concerned on your account. You know the trouble that exists between us and your nephew, so call him and let us make an agreement that he will leave us alone and we will leave him alone; let him have his religion and we will have ours.

When the Prophet came, Abu Talib said: Nephew, these notables have come to you that they may give you something and to take something from you.

He answered: Yes, you may give me one word by which you can rule the Arabs and subject the Persians to you.

Abu Jahl said: Yea, and ten words.

He said: You must say There is no god but God and you must repudiate what you worship beside Him.

They clapped their hands and said: Do you want to make all the gods into one God, Muhammad? That would be an extraordinary thing.

Then they said one to another: This fellow is not going to give you anything you want, so go and continue with the religion of your fathers until God judge between us.

So saying they departed.

Abu Talib said: Nephew, I don't think that you asked them anything extraordinary.

On hearing this the Messenger had hopes that he would accept Islam, and he said at once: You say it, uncle, and then I shall be able to intercede for you on Resurrection Day.

Seeing the Messenger's eagerness he replied: Were it not that I fear that you and your father's sons would be abused after my death and that Quraysh would think that I had only said it in fear of death, I would say it. I should only say it to give you pleasure.

As his death was near, al-Abbas looked at him as he was moving his lips and put his ear close to him and said: Nephew, by God, my brother has spoken the word you gave him to say.

God revealed concerning the people who came to him with their proposals: *Saad. By the Quran, possessor of the Remembrance. Nay!*

Those who were ungrateful are in vainglory and breach. (38:1-38:2) *Has he made all gods One God? Truly this is an astounding thing!* (38:5).[12]

Their chiefs went off saying: Go and remain true to your gods. This is a thing designed. We have not heard of this in the last religion (meaning Christians because they say: Verily God is the third of three.) This is nothing but an invention.

Then Abu Talib died. It was a short time after the sanctions had ended. Fatima bint Asad was without her beloved husband. She now had to face the loneliness of widowhood and the person she raised in her home, the Messenger of God, had lost his main support. She and her husband, Abu Talib, had taken the orphan Muhammad into his home and had made up for the missing kindness of his father, mother, and grandfather, Abd al-Muttalib. She and Abu Talib had looked after the young man, Muhammad, and cared for him. Abu Talib found him work in the service of Khadija. Finally, it was her husband who acted as the father at the marriage of Khadija and Muhammad.

Abu Talib had used all of his influence, personality, and social credit to protect the Prophet. He even bore the more than thirty months in confinement with the difficulties and hunger, and remained loyal to his nephew. Now, she had lost Abu Talib, the clan's only protector against the anger, danger, and hatred of the city.[13]

Fatima bint Asad had, previous to the death of her husband, borne the loss of Khadija, the Prophet's wife, who died a short time before Fatima's beloved husband. Khadija had lived through ten years of the Messenger's mission, more than thirty months of which had been ones of economic and social sanctions. Fatima had seen and had had her own sense of patience reinforced by her friendship with Khadija who had also suffered hunger and thirst.

Lesson 70(6). Critical Thinking Intellectual Standard Definitive (to be precise)

Definitive means to be conclusive, final, ultimate, precise: (*muhkama*). Definitive indicates that something is exact and accurate. It is an important aspect of Quranic critical thinking. It is part of strategies such as clarifying issues, conclusions, or beliefs and clarifying and analyzing the meanings of words and phrases. Not only is definitive a standard to be used when analyzing the Quranic message, but in expressing the Quranic message as well. That is, precision of expression is implied in the above strategies and forms an important part of reasoned dialogue and dialectic.

Quranic Chapter 16: The Bee (al-Nahl)

Signs 16:41-16:50

Makkah: *As for those who emigrated for God after they were wronged,*
We will, certainly, have a place of settlement for them
with benevolence in the present.
And the compensation of the world to come
will be greater,
if they had been knowing. (16:41)
Those who endured patiently
they put their trust in their Lord. (16:42)
And We sent not before you
but men to whom We reveal revelation.
So ask the People of Remembrance
if you had not been knowing. (16:43)
With the clear portents and the ancient scrolls,
We caused to descend the Remembrance to thee
*that **you** will make manifest to humanity*
what was sent down to them
and so that perhaps they will reflect. (16:44)
Were those who planned evil deeds safe that God
will not cause the earth to swallow them
or that the punishment will not approach them
from where they are not aware? (16:45)
Or that He take them in their going to and fro
where they will not be ones who frustrate Him? (16:46)
Or that He take them, destroying them little by little?
*Truly, **your** Lord is Gentle, Compassionate.* (16:47)
Consider they not that whatever things
God created casts its shadow to the right and to the left,

ones who prostrate themselves to God.
And they are ones in a state of lowliness? (16:48)
And to God prostrates whatever is in the heavens
and all that is in and on the earth
of moving creatures and the angels
and they grow not arrogant. (16:49)
They fear their Lord above them
and accomplish what they are commanded. (16:50)

COMMENTARY°

In contrast to those who persist in denying the truth, the section provides a glimpse of the true believers who are prepared to abandon their homes and migrate in order to lend support to God's cause. Their only motivation is their faith in God and in the hereafter. *As for those who emigrated for God after they were wronged, We will, certainly, have a place of settlement for them with benevolence in the present. And the compensation of the world to come will be greater, if they had been knowing. Those who endured patiently, they put their trust in their Lord.* (16:41-16:42)

These are the people who migrate, leaving their homes, abandoning all property and belongings, sacrificing an easy life with their own peoples and communities. They seek only God's reward. When they experience tyranny and injustice, they leave their homeland in order to live a life of obedience to God. Therefore, God promises them in return for the loss of their homes something that they will like: *As for those who emigrated for God after they were wronged, We will, certainly, have a place of settlement for them with benevolence in the present.* (16:41) They will be well compensated for their loss: *Those who endured patiently, they put their trust in their Lord.* (16:42) They associate no partner with Him in belief, reliance and trust.

The chapter reiterates the task of God's Messengers. This comes in the context of highlighting the mission of the last Messenger and the revelations bestowed on him from on high. This forms a prelude to warnings threatening the ungrateful with severe punishment. *And We sent not before **you** but men to whom We reveal revelation. So ask the People of Remembrance if you had not been knowing. With the clear portents and the ancient scrolls, We caused to descend the Remembrance to **you** that **you** will make manifest to humanity what was sent down to them and so that perhaps they will reflect.* (16:43-16:44)

Those Messengers We sent in former times were men too. We

did not send angels or any other type of creation. They were men chosen for a task: "whom We inspired," just like We inspire you. Their task, like yours, was simply to deliver their message. *With the clear portents and the ancient scrolls, We caused to descend the Remembrance to you that you will make manifest to humanity what was sent down to them and so that perhaps they will reflect.* (16:44) This applies to those who received earlier revelations but who then differed among themselves concerning the messages contained in their divine books. The Quran provides a clear judgment in their disputes. This also applies to the Prophet's contemporaries, the first community to be addressed by the Quran. The Prophet was there to explain it to them and to provide practical guidance on how it should be implemented in their lives. And that they may take thought on the signs God has placed in the universe confirming the message of truth, and reflect on the Quranic revelations. Indeed the Quran always calls on people to reflect and use their reason.

The present passage started with a reference to those who plot and scheme. It now concludes with two highly charged emotional touches. The first warns that against God's scheme no one is safe at any time of the night or day. The other invites people to join the whole universe in extolling God's praises and worshipping Him. Only we can refuse to submit to God, while everything around us glorifies and praises God:

Do those who devise evil schemes feel secure that God will not cause the earth to swallow them, or that suffering will not befall them whence they do not perceive? — Or that He will not suddenly take them to task in the midst of their comings and goings; for they can never frustrate His design? — Or that He will seize them when they are alert and apprehensive? Surely your Lord is Most Compassionate, Most merciful. Do people not see how every object God has created casts its shadow right and left, prostrating itself before God in complete submission? For, before God prostrates itself every living thing in the heavens and the earth, as do the angels. They do not behave in arrogant defiance. They fear their Lord, who is high above them, and do as they are bidden. *Were those who planned evil deeds safe that God will not cause the earth to swallow them or that the punishment will not approach them from where they are not aware? Or that He take them in their going to and fro where they will not be ones who frustrate Him? Or that He take them, destroying them little by little? Truly, your Lord is Gentle, Compassionate. Consider they not that whatever things God created casts its shadow to the right and to the left, ones who prostrate themselves to God. And they are ones in a*

state of lowliness? And to God prostrates whatever is in the heavens and all that is in and on the earth of moving creatures and the angels and they grow not arrogant. They fear their Lord above them and accomplish what they are commanded. (16:45-16:50)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS
LEARNING TO THINK QURANICALLY

I tried using writing as a way to learn by writing summaries in my own words of important points from the Quranic signs here.
I was able to formulate test questions.
I wrote out answers to my own questions.
I was able to get in touch with my emotions.
I learned that whenever I feel some negative emotion, I ask myself:
What, exactly, is the thinking leading to this emotion?
For example, if I are angry, ask myself, what is the thinking that is making me angry?
What other ways could I think about this situation?
For example, can I think about the situation so as to see the humor in it and what is pitiable in it?
If I can, concentrate on that thinking and my emotions, I will (eventually) shift to match them.

Lesson 70(7). Critical Thinking Intellectual Standard Connecting Complexities and Interrelationships

To connect complexities and interrelationships is an intellectual standard for critical thinking. This relates to the complexities and interrelationships between and among the Quranic verses. They require you to think beneath the surface of what the section or sign is saying. Exploring the Quranic message in the classroom depends on the quality of commitment of you and your classmates to develop your ability to discern the depth of what you are studying.

Quranic Chapter 16: The Bee (al-Nahl) Signs 16:51-16:60

Makkah: *And God said:*
Take not two gods to yourselves.
Truly, He is One God. Then, have reverence for Me. (16:51)
And to Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and the earth
and His is the way of life, that which is forever.
Are you God-conscious of other than God? (16:52)
And whatever you have of divine blessing is from God.
After that when harm afflicted you,
you make entreaties to Him. (16:53)
Again, when He removed the harm from you,
that is when a group of people among you
ascribe partners with their Lord. (16:54)
They are ungrateful for what We gave them.
So let them take joy. They will know. (16:55)
And they assign to what they know not a share
from what We provided them.
By God! You will, certainly, be asked
about what you had been devising. (16:56)
And they assign daughters to God! Glory be to Him!
And for themselves, that for which they lust. (16:57)
And when any of them was given good tidings of a female,
his face stayed one that is clouded over
and he chokes. (16:58)
He is secluded from the folk
because of the dire tidings he was given.
Will he hold it back with humiliation
or will he trample it in the earth dust?
Truly, how evil is the judgment they give! (16:59)
For those who believe not in the world to come
there is the reprehensible evil description

while the loftiest description belongs to God. And He is The Almighty, The Wise. (16:60)

COMMENTARY°

This third passage of the chapter is again devoted to the major issue of God's Oneness. The first three signs make it clear that God is one without partners, and that to Him alone the entire universe and all that it contains belong, and that He is the One who bestows all bounty and grace. The passage concludes with two comparisons between a master who owns and provides, and a slave who is able to do nothing of his own accord. Can these two be equal? How is it, then, that God, the Master of all and the Provider for all, is assigned equals who have no power and provide nothing? How can it be said that He is God and they are gods like Him?

In this passage a picture is painted of people suffering affliction and turning to God alone for help. When their affliction is removed, they associate partners with Him.

The passage also portrays some aspects of the superstitious nature of pagan beliefs, in that their followers attribute some of what God has provided for them to their false deities, while they themselves do not share with their slaves anything they own. They attribute females to God as His daughters while they hate to have daughters born to themselves: *And when any of them was given good tidings of a female, his face stayed one that is clouded over and he chokes.* (16:58) Yet at the same time they boast that they will have all the good things, and that they will be rewarded handsomely for their deeds. All these misconceptions they have inherited from earlier communities that held idolatrous beliefs.

God has said: Do not take [for worship] two deities, for He is but one God. Therefore, of Me alone stand in awe. His is all that is in the heavens and the earth, and to Him alone submission is always due. Will you then fear anyone but God? Whatever blessing you have comes from God; and whenever harm befalls you, it is to Him that you cry out for help. Yet no sooner does He remove the harm from you than some among you associate partners with their Lord, [as if] to show their ingratitude for what We have given them. Enjoy, then, your life [as you may]; before long you will come to know [the truth]. *And God said: Take not two gods to yourselves. Truly, He is One God. Then, have reverence for Me. And to Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and the earth and His is the way of life, that which is forever. Are you God-conscious of other than God? And whatever you have of divine blessing is from God. After that when harm af-*

flicted you, you make entreaties to Him. Again, when He removed the harm from you, that is when a group of people among you ascribe partners with their Lord. They are ungrateful for what We gave them. So let them take joy. They will know. (16:51-16:55)

God, the only deity, is also the One to whom everything belongs: *And to Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and the earth.* (16:52) All true faith also belongs to Him: *And His is the way of life, that which is forever. Are you God-conscious of other than God?* (16:52) It is a continuous process, ever since there was a faith and people to believe in it. Such belief means submission, and no faith is true unless it is based on submission to Him. He alone gives blessings and bestows grace: *And whatever you have of divine blessing is from God.* (16:53) It is also ingrained in human nature that whenever people experience hardship and difficulty, they turn to God, seeking His help. At such times, there is no room for the superstitions of idolatry or pagan beliefs. To Him alone people turn with their appeals to remove their hardship: *After that when harm afflicted you, you make entreaties to Him.*(16:53)

Thus we see that God and dominion in the universe belong to God alone. All submission is addressed to Him, and all grace is bestowed by Him, and to Him alone everyone should turn in all situations. Human nature is a witness to this. When it experiences affliction, harm or hardship, it returns to its purity and turns to God alone. Yet despite all this, no sooner does God save people from some type of harm that could destroy them than some of them associate partners with Him. This leads them to disbelief in God's guidance and to denying His grace. Such people should think clearly about what will happen to them after their brief enjoyment: *They are ungrateful for what We gave them. So let them take joy. They will know.* (16:55)

The chapter portrays here a picture of a certain type of human being which is found across every generation. When harm and affliction strikes, people's hearts turn to God for help. By nature, they know that He is the only One to protect them when no one else can. In times of comfort and pleasure, they are preoccupied with enjoyment, weakening their relationship with God: *And whatever you have of divine blessing is from God. After that when harm afflicted you, you make entreaties to Him. Again, when He removed the harm from you, that is when a group of people among you ascribe partners with their Lord.* (16:53-16:54) They deviate from His path, following diverse ways which may lead to outright idolatry, or may take the form of ascribing divinity to values and situations, even though they may

not describe these as deities.

Indeed deviation may be even more extreme so as to prevent people from turning to God in times of hardship. Instead they may turn to some other creature, appealing to them to save their skins. They may do so under the pretext that such creatures enjoy a special position with God, or they may have some other excuse. For example, when people appeal to 'saints' to cure their illnesses or remove their afflictions. Such people are thus even more deviant than the pagan Arabs. *And they assign to what they know not a share from what We provided them.* (16:56) They thus prohibit themselves some types of cattle, not allowing themselves to ride these or to eat their meat, or they allow these animals' use to men, forbidding them to women, as we saw in Chapter 6, Cattle. They do this in the name of their alleged deities of which they know nothing. They are simply false inventions which they inherited from earlier ignorant generations. It is God who gave them this bounty, the cattle which they ride and use. Yet they give a portion of these to things which are in reality unknown to them. Their false deities did not give them the cattle. The cattle were created by God who has made them available to them. He calls on people to believe in His Oneness, but they stubbornly associate partners with Him. The whole situation is full of irony which no human being of sound mind can accept.

This is stated emphatically, with an oath. *By God! You will, certainly, be asked about what you had been devising.* (16:56) It is an invention that destroys the very foundation of faith, because it flies in the face of the concept of God's Oneness. (16:57-16:59)

Deviation from the right faith is not limited to beliefs. Indeed when people deviate from the essence of faith, their deviation spreads into their social life and its traditions. Whether faith is given prominence or kept in the background in any society, it continues to be the prime influence on living conditions. The Arabs of the days of ignorance, or tribal honor, used to claim that God had daughters, i.e. the angels, yet they themselves hated that daughters should be born to them. Thus daughters can be assigned to God, while they give themselves the sons they love.

The chapter paints a grim picture of the practices of ignorance: *And when any of them was given good tidings of a female, his face stayed one that is clouded over and he chokes.* (16:58) He is sad and angry, trying to suppress his fury, as though the birth of a girl is a disaster when she is a gift from God, just like any boy. Man cannot fashion the foetus in the womb so as to determine the sex of his child. He cannot breathe life into it, or make the fertilized egg a human

being. It is sufficient to reflect how life grows, by God's will, from a sperm into a human being, to make the birth of a child, of either sex, a joyous occasion. It is a miracle of creation despite the fact that it takes place all the time. Why should a man who is given a daughter feel sad and gloomy when he himself has no say in any stage of the process of creation. It is all done by God, while he himself is only the means to accomplish God's will.

It is divine wisdom that has determined that life is started with a couple: a male and a female. This means that the woman is as essential to the continuation of life as the man, indeed more so, because it is inside the woman that the first stage of life is completed. How can a man thus feel sad when given the news of the birth of a daughter? Why does he hide away, feeling ashamed, when life cannot continue and prosper without both spouses? This is obviously then a case of deviant social concepts and traditions. Therefore, the chapter comments: (16:59)

Whenever human society deviates from the true faith, ignorant concepts begin to raise their ugly faces. In fact we see the same concepts that prevailed then creeping up again today. Many social classes do not welcome the birth of a girl. It is often the case that a woman is not treated on an equal footing with a man. She is not offered the same care or respect. This is an aspect of paganism the seeds of which were planted with the deviation from the true Quranic faith that has affected many communities.

It is amazing that some people criticize, even condemn, the Quranic message and its laws, particularly with regard to women, on the basis of what they see in societies that have deviated from the Quranic message. They do not trouble themselves to look at the relevant Quranic concepts and the fundamental changes they have produced in social conditions as well as in people's minds and feelings. What they should realize when they look at the true Quranic viewpoint with regard to women is that this viewpoint has not been the product of any practical necessity, human theory or social or economic need. It is a viewpoint that is inherent in the Quranic faith which was revealed by God who has given humanity a position of honor. This honor applies both to man and woman. Both have equal status and both are honored by God.

By nature, the Quranic message differs with all other creeds and societies in concepts and outlook. The difference between the two is as wide as the difference between the ungrateful' characteristics and God's own attributes. For He is far above all comparison: (16:60)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

How to Build Your Argument from a few main ideas. State where you are going and what you will prove.

Know your audience: where are they coming from?
Cover mutual ground as a starting point.
Use familiar vocabulary to begin; introduce and define new concepts gradually.
Adapt the presentation's goals with the interests of your audience.
Treat each audience as a unique group.
Convince them with facts and logic.
Demonstrate that you know what you are talking about, but on their level!
Review and summarize in your conclusion.
Summarize what you've told them.
Check for comprehension.
Leave time for questions and discussion.
Follow up with options so audience can contact you.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I thought about the depth of interrelationships as expressed in this sign between God, the Messenger and the believers.

Lesson 70(8). Critical Thinking Intellectual Standard Appropriateness (to be relevant)

Appropriate means bearing upon or relating to the matter at hand, that is understanding the Quranic message. It implies a close logical relationship with, and importance to, what the Quran is revealing. Its relevance and validity of information helps in structuring problems and solving them. The appropriateness of the Quran's message has been clear for over 1400 years as it is the model which the believers follow.

It is not the effort that you put into this Quranic Studies that is evaluated, but the quality of your learning. Quranic appropriateness connects to its teaching you how to think. Once you have assessed the issues, concepts and information relevant to the particular sign or signs, your thinking will be focused on the task, question or problem related from the sign or signs.

The Quranic message conforms to the principles of good reasoning. It is sensible and teaches good judgment through its consistent, logical, complete, relevant and appropriate arguments on issues that are important to human life. Being sensitive with an ability to judge appropriateness is only developed with continuous practice, practice in distinguishing the relevant from the irrelevant, by evaluating what is appropriate and by arguing for and against the appropriateness of facts.

Quranic Chapter 16: The Bee (al-Nahl)
Signs 16:61-16:65

Makkah: *And if God were to take humanity to task for their injustice,*
He would not leave on it a moving creature.
Rather, He postpones them for a term, that is determined.
And when their term drew near,
neither will they delay it an hour, nor press it forward. (16:61)
And they assign to God what they dislike.
Their tongues allege the lie that the fairer things will be theirs.
Without a doubt, for them is the fire,
and they will be ones made to hasten to it. (16:62)
By God! We, certainly, sent Messengers
to communities before you.
Satan made their actions appear pleasing to them.
So he is their protector on this Day
and theirs will be a painful punishment. (16:63)
And We caused the Book to descend to you,
but that you will make manifest to them
those things in which they were at variance in it
and as a guidance and a mercy for a folk who believe. (16:64)

And God caused water to descend from heaven and from it
gave life to the earth after its death.
Truly, in this is a sign for a folk who hear. (16:65)

COMMENTARY°

At this point the question of associating partners with God is closely related to that of denying the life to come. Both stem from the same sort of deviation. They are interlinked in people's minds, leading to clear influences on the individual, human society and life altogether. While the ungrateful are evil, in thought, behavior, beliefs, concepts, and practices, God has the most supreme attributes. He cannot be compared with anyone, least of all those ungrateful. He is mighty, setting everything in its right place, wise, acting always on the basis of infinite wisdom.

He certainly can punish people for their wrongdoing. Had He chosen to do so, He would have brought everything down over their heads. But in His wisdom, He has decided to give them respite, for a definite term: *And if God were to take humanity to task for their injustice, He would not leave on it a moving creature. Rather, He postpones them for a term, that is determined. And when their term drew near, neither will they delay it an hour, nor press it forward.* (16:61)

God has created the human being and bestowed on him grace and blessings of all types. We are the only creature on earth that spreads corruption, commits injustice, denies our Creator, allows tyranny within our own social set up and inflicts harm on other species. Yet despite all this, God is merciful to us, gives us one chance after another, and never abandons us altogether. His wisdom goes hand in hand with His might; His grace with His justice. But human beings are short-sighted, deluded by the respite given them. They do not feel how graceful God is to them until His justice brings them to account at the end of the term He has appointed for them. *And if God were to take humanity to task for their injustice, He would not leave on it a moving creature. Rather, He postpones them for a term, that is determined. And when their term drew near, neither will they delay it an hour, nor press it forward.* (16:61)

What is even more amazing is that those who associate partners with God assign to Him what they dislike for themselves, whether daughters or other things. They then falsely claim that they will only have what is good in return for what they do and allege. The Quran states what they shall have, and this differs widely from what they claim: *And they assign to God what they dislike.* (16:62)

The translation of this sign here is the nearest one possible. But the original Arabic expression describes their tongues as though they are the lie itself, or a reflection of it giving its exact likeness, as we say of a woman walking gracefully, 'she is grace itself.' Literally, the sign states, 'their lie of a tongue asserts.' They have been lying for such a very long time that they themselves represent a symbol indicating falsehood.

Their claim that they shall have the supreme reward when they assign to God what they hate for themselves is the lie their tongues reflect. Before the sign is completed however, the Quran places them face to face with the truth, namely, that their reward is undoubtedly the Fire. They deserve this because of what they have done in their lives: *Their tongues allege the lie that the fairer things will be theirs.* (16:62) They will be sent directly to it: *Without a doubt, for them is the fire, and they will be ones made to hasten to it.* (16:62)

Those Arabs were not the first community to deviate from the path of the truth, nor were they the first to attribute to God what they did not accept for themselves. Other communities before them traversed the same deviation and false claims against God. Satan made their concepts and actions seem fair to them and they accepted his bidding. Thus he became their master. God, then, sent His Messenger to save them, show them the truth and judge between them in their disputes over their faith. He provided guidance to the believers and delivered a message that is an act of grace bestowed on them: *By God! We, certainly, sent Messengers to communities before you. Satan made their actions appear pleasing to them. So he is their protector on this Day and theirs will be a painful punishment. And We caused the Book to descend to you, but that you will make manifest to them those things in which they were at variance in it and as a guidance and a mercy for a folk who believe.* (16:63-16:64)

This means that the purpose of the last message is to judge in the disputes that arise between the different peoples who claim to believe in previous messages. The original message is based on God's Oneness. Yet doubts and confusion have crept into this central concept. All types of distortion of its clarity in any way or form are absolutely false. The Quran clarifies all this and serves as guidance and grace to those whose hearts are willing to receive it.

At this point, the chapter reviews some of the aspects pointing to God's Oneness in what God has created in the universe, and in the qualities and characteristics He has given man, as well as in the aspects of grace He has bestowed on him which none but God could have provided. In the sign we have just discussed He mentions His

book, the Quran, which is the best aspect of grace God has bestowed on us as it imparts life to souls. Now, this is followed by mentioning the water God sends down from the sky to give physical life to us and other creatures. *And God caused water to descend from heaven and from it gave life to the earth after its death. Truly, in this is a sign for a folk who hear.* (16:65) Water is indeed the source of life for every living thing. This sign makes it the source of life for the whole earth, implying that this includes all that exists on earth. The One who transforms death into life is indeed the One who deserves to be God and to whom worship is addressed: *Truly, in this is a sign for a folk who hear.* They should indeed reflect on what they hear and listen to its message. In fact the Quran repeatedly mentions the signs pointing to God and His authority, and how He brings life into what is dead. It draws people's attentions to this, because it provides irrefutable proof for anyone who reflects on what he sees and hears.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What factors make the interrelationship among believers a difficult problem in terms of being part of a community?
What are some of the complexities of this question?
Is this question simple or complex?
Is it easy or difficult to answer well and truly?
What makes this a complex question?
How are we dealing with the complexities inherent in the question?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to explain the main points of the signs to another student.

LESSON 70(9). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL STANDARD WORTHINESS (FOCUSSING ON THE IMPORTANT, NOT THE TRIVIAL)

Sufficiently great or import to be worthy of attention.

QURANIC CHAPTER 16: THE BEE (AL-NAHL) SIGNS 16:66-16:70

Makkah: *And, truly, for you in the flocks is a lesson.*
We satiate you from what is in their bellies—
between waste and blood—exclusively milk,
that which is delicious to the ones who drink. (16:66)
From fruits of the date palm trees and grapevines
you take to yourselves of it what obscures
the mind and fairer provisions.
Truly, in it is a sign for a folk who be reasonable. (16:67)
And your Lord revealed to you the bee:
Take to yourself houses from the mountains
and in the trees and in what they construct. (16:68)
Again, eat of all the fruits and insert yourself submissively
into the ways of your Lord.
Drink goes forth from their bellies in hues,
ones that are at variance, wherein is healing for humanity.
Truly, in this is, certainly,
a sign for a folk who reflect. (16:69)
And God created you. Again, He calls you to Himself.
And of you there are some who are returned
to the most wretched of lifetimes
so that he knows nothing
after having knowledge of something.
Truly, God is Knowing, Powerful. (16:70)

COMMENTARY°

Another sign is derived from the creation of cattle and their lives: *And, truly, for you in the flocks is a lesson. We satiate you from what is in their bellies—between waste and blood—exclusively milk, that which is delicious to the ones who drink* (16:66) How is milk produced through the udders of cattle? It is made of what remains in the bellies of cattle after they have digested their food and the absorption of the excretions in the intestines to transform it into blood. The blood is then circulated to every cell in the body, but when it reaches the milk glands or the udder, it becomes milk through a fine

process set by God. This is indeed an aspect of His fine and inimitable creation.

Such pure scientific facts apart, the Quran carries within its own unique characteristics irrefutable proofs of its being revealed by God, provided we appreciate such characteristics as they truly are. However, one scientific fact like this, expressed with such accuracy, refutes all arguments advanced by those who are hardened in their rejection of the truth. *From fruits of the date palm trees and grapevines you take to yourselves of it what obscures the mind and fairer provisions.* (16:67) Such fruits come out of the life which is produced through the rain pouring down from the sky. From them people make wine and other intoxicating drinks, which were not forbidden at the time this chapter was revealed. People also derive from such fruits wholesome food. The way this sign is phrased implies that intoxicants are unwholesome, which serves as a preliminary indication of their forthcoming prohibition. The sign describes the situation as it was in practice. It does not imply that wines and intoxicants were permissible. On the contrary it hints that they will soon be forbidden. *Truly, in it is a sign for a folk who be reasonable.* (16:67) People with reason are sure to realize that the provider of all these fruits and other provisions is God, the One who deserves to be worshipped.

Your Lord has inspired the bee: (16:68-16:69) The bees work on the prompting of their nature which God has given them. It is an inspiration that they follow. The work the bees do is so detailed, accurate and well planned that the rational mind finds it difficult to contemplate. This applies to the building of the hives, the division of the work between the tees, and to their production of pure honey.

The bees take up home, according to their nature, in hills and mountains, in trees and in structures people put up for their vines or other plants. God has smoothed things for the bees through what He has planted in their nature and through the nature of the world around them. The sign states that honey provides a cure for people. Although this has already been fully explained by some medical experts, it is also true for the simple reason that the Quran states it. This is what every Muslim should believe, based on the complete truth embodied in the Quran. This is what the Prophet expressed very clearly.

Once the Prophet recommended honey to someone who was suffering from diarrhea. The Prophet had complete trust in the face of the patient's seeming deterioration when given honey to drink. But the situation ended with a clear confirmation of the truth stated in the Quran. A Muslim should always have such complete trust in the

truth of what the Quran says, even though reality may appear to contradict it at times. In other words, what is stated in the Quran is more truthful than apparent reality, which could easily change, giving way to a new reality that will confirm the Quranic statement.

In the next passage we will see how the chapter mentions the hide, wool and hair of cattle, because the context then is one of dwellings, homes and places of refuge. Therefore, the aspects of cattle mentioned there are those that fit that scene. This is an essential element of the artistic harmony evident in the Quran.

The chapter moves on to touch on something much closer to human beings, because it relates to their very being, their life on earth, provisions, spouses, children and grandchildren. They are more likely to feel an affinity with this and to respond positively to the message it provides:

It is God who has created you; and in time will cause you to die. Some of you are left to the most feeble stage of life, so that they no longer know what they had previously known. God is indeed All-Knowing, infinite in His power. To some of you God has given more than He has given to others. Those who are so favored are unwilling to share their provisions with those whom their right hands possess, so that they are all equal in this respect. Will they, then, deny God's favors? (16:70)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Stage 1

- Develop a statement of the topic
- List what you understand, what you've been told and what opinions you hold about it
- Identify resources available for research
- Define timelines and due dates and how they affect the development of your study
- Print the list as your reference

Stage 2

- Define your destination, what you want to learn

- Clarify or verify with your teacher or an "expert" on your subject
- Develop your frame of reference, your starting point,
by listing what you already know about the subject

What opinions and prejudices do you already have about this?
What have you been told, or read about, this topic?
What resources are available to you for research

When gathering information, keep an open mind
Look for chance resources that pop up!
Play the "reporter" and follow leads
If you don't seem to find what you need, ask librarians or your teacher.
How does your timeline and due dates affect your research?

Stage 3
Keep in mind that you need to follow a schedule.
- Work back from the due date and define stages of development, not just with this first phase, but in completing the whole project.

Summary of Critical Thinking:
1. Determine the facts of a new situation or subject without prejudice
2. Place these facts and information in a pattern so that you can understand them
3. Accept or reject the source values and conclusions based upon your experience, judgment, and beliefs

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I am frequently able to explain these signs to someone.
I know that if I cannot explain these sign to someone else, it shows that I have not learned them well enough.

LESSON 70(10). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL STANDARD NUMEROUS OR MULTIPLE VIEWPOINTS

Observation and information are the basis for sound conclusions. You learn to distinguish between what you observe from the Quranic signs and what you conclude. You delve into the facts given in the signs to find the implications as well as the concepts. You separate guessing from clear conclusions. You normally have a tendency to make inferences that reinforce your own egocentric or sociocentric world views. You learn to evaluate inferences that are made when your own desires are involved from inferences that develop sound conclusions. You should know that every interpretation that is made is based on inference and that you interpret every situation in which you find yourselves.

The Middle Community, Moderation (*ummatan wasatan, wasatiyyah*): The Quranic conception of the Middle Community visualizes a certain degree of parity between dialogic and co-related concepts such as reason and revelation, matter and spirit, rights and duties, individualism and society, compulsion and voluntarism, text and *ijtihad*, ideal and reality, continuity and change, and between the past realities and future prospects. How does *wasatiyyah* manifest itself and achieve its desire purposes of equilibrium and moderation?

QURANIC CHAPTER 16: THE BEE (AL-NAHL)
SIGNS 16:71-16:76

Makkah: *God gave advantage to some of you*
over some others in provision.
But those who were given advantage
are not ones who give over their provision
to what their right hands possessed
so that they are equal in it.
Why negate they the divine blessing of God? (16:71)
And God assigned to you spouses (f) of your own kind
and has assigned you from your spouses (f),
children and grandchildren
and provided you with what is good.
Believe they, then, in falsehood and are ungrateful
for the divine blessing of God? (16:72)
They worship other than God what has no sway,
no power to provide for them anything
from the heavens and the earth,
nor are they able to do so. (16:73)
So propound not parables for God.
Truly, God Knows and you know not. (16:74)

God propounded a parable of a chattel servant
who has no power over anything
and one to whom We provided from Us a fairer provision.
And he spends from it secretly and openly publishing it.
Are they on the same level?
The Praise belongs to God. Nay! Most of them know not! (16:75)
And God propounded a parable of two men,
one of them unwilling to speak.
He has no power over anything
and he is a heavy burden to his defender.
Whichever way he turns his face, he brings no good.
Is he on the same level as the one who commands justice
and he who is on a straight path? (16:76)

COMMENTARY°

That people have different means is a well-known phenomenon. This is more pronounced in communities where there is much inequity. The chapter refers to this phenomenon which was clearly apparent in Arabian society, and makes use of it in order to dispel those myths that had their roots in the pagan beliefs of the Arabs. These have been referred to in an earlier chapter. One such myth was their practice of allocating to false gods a share of the provisions of agricultural produce God gave them. Here the chapter identifies that they do not give such provisions to their slaves to establish equity. How come, then, they give a portion of what God has granted them to false gods? *God gave advantage to some of you over some others in provision. But those who were given advantage are not ones who give over their provision to what their right hands possessed so that they are equal in it. Why negate they the divine blessing of God?* (16:71) Instead of expressing their thanks and gratitude to God who has given them these provisions, they associate partners with Him.

The third aspect looks at people, their spouses, children and grandchildren. It begins with a statement of the relationship between the two sexes: *And God assigned to you spouses (f) of your own kind and has assigned you from your spouses (f), children and grandchildren and provided you with what is good.* (16:72) All belong to the same human race, and the female is not an inferior species to be ashamed of when a daughter is born. *And God assigned to you spouses (f) of your own kind and has assigned you from your spouses (f), children and grandchildren and provided you with what is good.* (16:72) Humans are mortal, and so they feel that their lives continue through their children and grandchildren. Touching upon this aspect

is very significant. To this blessing is added the provision of sustenance, because of the similarity between the two types of blessing: *And God assigned to you spouses (f) of your own kind and has assigned you from your spouses (f), children and grandchildren and provided you with what is good.* (16:72) The comment at the end of the sign takes the form of a rhetorical question: *Believe they, then, in falsehood and are ungrateful for the divine blessing of God?* (16:72) Do they associate false partners with Him, in flagrant disobedience of His orders, when He has given them all these blessings? He is the Lord of all the world and His Lordship has practical manifestations in their lives at all times.

Everything other than God in respect -Co beliefs is false. Thus, all their deities and myths are false, having no truth in them. They deny God's grace and blessings, when these are true, having practical effects in their own lives.

Instead of God, they worship something that can provide them with no sustenance from the heavens or the earth. Never can they have such power. *They worship other than God what has no sway, no power to provide for them anything from the heavens and the earth, nor are they able to do so.* (16:73)

It is indeed amazing that human nature can become so twisted as to allow the worship of things that can provide people with nothing. They prefer such things to God, the Creator who provides them with all they have and all the blessings they enjoy. Yet they go even further, attributing to them similarities with God. Therefore, the commandment: *So propound not parables for God. Truly, God Knows and you know not.* (16:74) God has no peers, so people must never claim that there is anyone equal or similar to Him.

The chapter then gives two examples of a master who can give and provide and a disabled slave who earns nothing. These examples are given to bring the eternal truth they had overlooked closer to their understanding. That truth is that God has no peers and that they must never equate God with anyone in their worship. Everyone and everything other than God is created by Him, and all are His servants.

God makes this comparison between a person enslaved, unable to do anything of his own accord, and a [free] man on whom We have bestowed goodly favors, and he gives of it both in private and in public. Can these two be equal? All praise is to God alone, but most people have no knowledge. And God makes another comparison between two men, one of whom is dumb and can do nothing of his own accord. He is a sheer burden to his master: wherever he sends him, he accomplishes no good. Can he be considered equal to one

who enjoins justice and follows a straight path? (16:75-16:76)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What facts are relevant to this issue?
What facts must we consider in deciding this issue?
What information do we need?
Do you mean that your classmate is assuming that ...?
The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are ... ?
Figure out all significant ideas needed to understand and answer your question.
You may need to analyze these concepts. Use a good dictionary.
My inferences or conclusions are based on Quranic concepts and theories.
What is the most basic concept in my question?
What Quranic terms have I learned?
What are the key concepts (definitions) of the Quranic message in this section?
What ideas or principles does the Quranic message clarify?
What theories does the Quranic message present?
Is this idea causing problems for me or for others?
I think this is a good theory, but could you explain it more fully?
What is the main hypothesis you are using in your reasoning?
Are you using this term in keeping with established usage?
What idea is this author using in his or her thinking?
Is there a problem with it?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I know that I cannot interpret information without ideas or concepts, or some way to give meaning.
I am able to find the key idea, the central concept of the signs.
I know the subject of the concept and its vocabulary.

LESSON 70(11). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING

An essential requirement of critical thinking is the ability to think about thinking, to engage in what is sometimes called "metacognition." One possible definition of critical thinking is the art of thinking about your thinking while you're thinking in order to make your thinking better: more clear, more accurate, more fair. It is precisely at the level of "thinking about thinking" that most critical thinking stands in contrast to uncritical thinking. Critical thinkers can analyze thought—take it apart and put it together again. For the uncritical, thoughts are "just there". "I think what I think, don't ask me why." The analytical vocabulary in the English language (such terms as assume, infer, conclude, criteria, point of view: relevance: issue, elaborate, ambiguous, objection, support, bias, justify, perspective, contradiction, consistent, credibility, evidence, interpret, distinguish) enables us to think more precisely about our thinking. We are in a better position to assess reasoning (our own, as well as that of others) when we can use analytic vocabulary with accuracy and ease.

QURANIC EXAMPLES OF THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING

The Quran encourages thinking about thinking (metacognition). God commands us to reflect about something carefully so one may not jump to conclusions without critical insight. *Say: Journey through the earth; then, look on how He began the creation. Again, God will cause the last growth to grow. Truly, God is Powerful over everything.* (29:20)

God directs the attention of people to think by saying: Say to them. An example of the hundreds of "*Say*" signs: *Say: I admonish you in but one thing: That you stand up for God by twos and one by one. Again, reflect. There is not in your companion any madness. He is only a warner to you of a severe punishment in advance of you.* (34:46)

The Quran gives narratives of the past so that the people may think and reflect over them.

God tells us that the objective of so many stories which have been mentioned in various chapters is to motivate humanity to think and reflect in order to get lessons and to seek wisdom. *If We willed, We would have exalted him with them, but he inclined towards the earth, and followed his own desires. And his parable is like the parable of a dog. If you will attack it, it pants. Or if you will leave it, it pants. That is the parable of the folk, those who denied Our signs. Then, relate these narratives so that perhaps they will reflect.* (7:176)

In the field of *tawhid* and to direct human being's attention to the creator: *Truly, in the creation of the heavens and of the earth and the alteration of nighttime and daytime there are signs for those imbued with intuition, those who remember God while upright and sitting and on their sides and they re-*

flect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: Our Lord! You had not created this in vain. Glory be to You! Then, protect us from the punishment of the fire. (3:191-3:192)

To reflect upon the signs in the Quran: It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect. (38:29)

WHAT ARE THE OBSTACLES TO BEING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKERS?

Arrogance (*takabbur*): *The Messiah will never disdain that he be a servant of God nor the angels, the ones who are brought near to Him. Whoever disdains His worship and grows arrogant, He will assemble them altogether to Himself.* (2:34)

Traditionalism and Blind Following (*taashub* and *taqlid*): *When it was said to them: Follow what God caused to descend. They said: Nay! We will follow whatever we discovered our fathers were following on it—even though their fathers had been not at all reasonable—nor are they truly guided.* (2:170)

Giving the Lie to the Messages (*takzib*): *Devised he a lie against God or is there a madness in him? Nay! Those who believe not in the world to come there is a punishment and a going far astray.* (34:8)

Hypocrisy (*nifaq*): *They, those who say: Spend not on such ones who are with the Messenger of God until they break away. To God belongs the treasures of the heavens and the earth but the ones who are hypocrites understand not.* (63:7)

Ignorance and Not Being Aware of the Truth (*jahlu*): *Even if We sent down the angels to them and the dead spoke to them and we assembled everything against them, face to face, yet they would not believe unless God wills, except many of them are ignorant.* (6:111)

Lust and Desires (*hawa*): *Surely, He explained distinctly to you what He forbade to you unless you were driven by necessity to it. Truly, many cause others to go astray by their desires without knowledge. Truly, your Lord, He is greater in knowledge of the ones who exceed the limits.* (6:119)

Reliance on Conjecture, Opinion: *If you have obeyed most of who are on the earth, they will cause you to go astray from the way of God. They follow nothing but opinion and they only guess.* (6:116)

Turning Away from the Truth (*fasiqun*, ones who disobey): *O Prophet! Struggle with the ones who are ungrateful and the ones who are hypocrites and be you harsh against them. Their place of shelter will be hell. Miserable will be the Homecoming! They swear by God that they said not against the Prophet but, certainly, they said the word of ingratitude and they were ungrateful after their submission to God. They were about to do something that they never attain. They sought revenge but that God would enrich them and His Messenger with His grace. If they repent, it would be better for them. If they turn away, God will punish them with a painful punishment in the present and in the world to come. There is not for them on earth either a protector or a helper.* (9:73-9:74)

QURANIC CHAPTER 16: THE BEE (AL-NAHL) SIGNS 16:77-16:83

Makkah: *And to God belongs*
the unseen of the heavens and the earth.
And the command of the Hour is not but the twinkling of an eye
to one's sight or it is nearer.
Truly, God is Powerful over everything. (16:77)
And God brought you out from the wombs of your mothers
and you know nothing.
And He assigned to you the ability to hear and sight
and mind so that perhaps you will give thanks. (16:78)
Consider you not the birds,
the ones caused to be subservient
in the firmament of the heavens?
None holds them back but God.
Truly, in this are the signs for a folk who believe. (16:79)
And God assigned for you your houses as places of comfort
and rest and assigned for you the hides of flocks
for your houses which you find light on the day of your departure
and the day of your halting and of their wool and furs and hair
—furnishing and enjoyment for awhile. (16:80)
And God made for you shade out of what He created
and made for you the mountains as a refuges in the time of need
and has made for you tunics to protect you from
the heat and tunics to protect you from your violenc
Thus, He fulfills His divine blessing to yo
so that perhaps you will submit to God. (16:81)
Then, if they turned away, for you is only
the delivering of the clear message. (16:82)
They recognize the divine blessing of God. Again, they reject it
and most of them are the ones who are ungrateful. (16:83)

COMMENTARY°

In this passage the chapter continues its discussion of the aspects confirming the truth of God's Oneness, such as the great variety of creation, the perfection of God's blessings and His absolute knowledge of all things. However, in this passage, prominence is given to the question of resurrection. The Last Hours which is a Quranic expression denoting the gathering and reckoning on the Day of Judgement, is one of the secrets which God keeps to Himself. The passage refers to the different hidden secrets of God's creation in the heavens and the earth, in human beings and across the wide universe. One of

these relates to the Last Hour, whose timing is known to God alone. He controls it with ease: *And to God belongs the unseen of the heavens and the earth. And the command of the Hour is not but the twinkling of an eye to one's sight or it is nearer. Truly, God is Powerful over everything.* (16:77) Another secret relates to what is created in the wombs of females. It is God alone who lets the foetus come out of the womb, with no knowledge whatsoever of the world it comes into. It is He also who gives human beings the blessings of hearing, seeing and thinking. These are favors which deserve gratitude. The chapter also refers to the birds and how they are given the ability to fly. Needless to say, they are held aloft in mid-air by none other than God.

This is followed by a reference to some material blessings given to humanity. These are relevant to the aforementioned secrets. They include the blessings of abode, rest, shade and shelter in built up homes and temporary dwellings made of animal skin. The latter have the advantage of being easy to carry and re-erect when people are on the move. Reference is also made to furniture and other articles made of animal wool, fur and hair, and to places of shelter and garments that protect people from the heat of the sun and the might of the enemy. God reminds people of His blessings and how He has perfected them, so that they may fulfil their duty: *And God made for you shade out of what He created and made for you the mountains as a refuges in the time of need and has made for you tunics to protect you from the heat and tunics to protect you from your violence. Thus, He fulfills His divine blessing to you so that perhaps you will submit to God.* (16:81)

This is followed by details relating to resurrection, juxtaposed against pagans and the idols they worship. God's Messengers bear witness against such ungrateful, while the Prophet Muhammad is witness against his own people.

It is close at hand, but according to a calculation different from that of human beings. To bring it on, in full preparation, does not take much time. It is merely the twinkling of an eye and it is there, ready for all humanity: *And to God belongs the unseen of the heavens and the earth. And the command of the Hour is not but the twinkling of an eye to one's sight or it is nearer. Truly, God is Powerful over everything.* (16:77) To resurrect such countless numbers of God's creation, gather them all together, reckon their deeds, assign the reward for each of them, is all easy for God whose will is accomplished in no time. Whenever He wills something, He only says to it, 'Be', and it is instantly accomplished. If this seems difficult, it only looks

so to the eyes of those who see, measure and count by human standards and criteria. Therefore, they are grossly mistaken.

To make things easier for people to understand, the Quran gives a simple example from human life. People can in no way accomplish it themselves, and they cannot formulate a clear idea of how it happens. Yet it takes place at every moment of the day and night: *And God brought you out from the wombs of your mothers and you know nothing. And He assigned to you the ability to hear and sight and mind so that perhaps you will give thanks.* (16:78)

This is something close to us, yet it is so far away. We may see the different stages a foetus goes through, but we do not know how these are accomplished, because it is part of the secret of life which is known to God alone. The knowledge of our claims and boasts of, and which we want to use in order to test the reality of the Last Hour and the secrets of God's hidden knowledge, is something acquired: *And God brought you out from the wombs of your mothers and you know nothing.* (16:78) Even the most advanced scientist is born devoid of knowledge. Whatever he subsequently learns is given to him as a blessing from God, within the limits He has set for humanity, and contingent upon what is needed for life on this planet: *And He assigned to you the ability to hear and sight and mind.* (16:78) It should be mentioned here that the Arabic word rendered in the translation as 'minds', originally denotes, 'hearts'. The Quran, however, uses it in reference to all human faculties of perception, which are generally referred to as constituting the human mind and intellect. The Arabic term also includes the power of inspiration, the nature and working of which are unknown to us. The Quran reminds us here that God has given people all these faculties, *so that perhaps you will give thanks.* (16:78) When we appreciate the value of these blessings God has given us and His other blessings, we will certainly be grateful to Him. The first step in showing our gratitude is to believe in God, the Sovereign, the Supreme, who alone deserves to be worshipped.

Among the wonders that testify to God's limitless power and His control of everything in the universe is one that we see every day without giving it much thought. This is the ability of birds to fly: *Consider you not the birds, the ones caused to be subservient in the firmament of the heavens?* (16:79) Because it is so familiar to us to see birds flying in mid- air, we do not pay attention to the fascinating wonder their flying involves. Our minds do not give it much thought unless we are fully alerted to it, contemplating it with the eye of a talented poet seeking to capture every detail and nuance. The sign

makes it clear that as the birds fly, none but God holds them aloft. He does so through His laws of nature, which make the birds able to fly and make the atmosphere around us amenable for their flight. It is His laws that keep the birds in mid-air, floating safely, without fear that they may fall: *None holds them back but God. Truly, in this are the signs for a folk who believe.* (16:79)

A believer's heart is one which appreciates the wonders of creation, looks at them with awe and expresses his feelings with worship and glorification of God, the Creator of all things. Believers who are talented in expressing their thoughts and feelings write masterpieces of every type in describing the wonders of God's creation. They also describe their own feelings and how they are touched when they look at different creatures. No poet can rival their work if his heart is not kindled by the light of faith.

The chapter takes us another step in reviewing some manifestations of God's power and His blessings which He bestows on man. It takes us now into the dwellings of the Arabs at the time, looking at their home comforts and furnishings:

And God has made your homes as places of rest, and has given you dwellings out of the skins of animals, which are easy for you to handle when you travel and when you camp. Out of their wool, fur and hair, He has given you furnishings and articles of convenience for temporary use. And God has made for you, out of the many things He has created, shelter and shade, and has given you places of refuge in the mountains and has furnished you with garments to protect you from the heat and other garments to protect you from your [mutual] violence. Thus does He perfect His favors to you, so that you may submit to Him. (16:80-16:81)

The ease, comfort and reassurance one has at home are certainly a blessing from God but it is something best appreciated only by those who are homeless. They are mentioned here shortly after speaking about what the Quran describes as ghayb, or what lies beyond the reach of human perception. In fact, the connotations of home comforts are not far removed from those of ghayb, because in both we sense that there is a reality that is kept hidden. Therefore, a reminder of the comforts we find in our own homes should alert us to the value of this great blessing.

We may add a word here about the Quranic view of the home in the light of its description in the Quran as a 'place of rest'. This is an expression that is inferior in its connotations to the Arabic term used in the Quran, namely *sakan*. Yet it gives us an idea that the Quranic message wants one's habitat to be a place of rest, comfort and reas-

surance. In the home one should feel at ease, safe and secure in one's environment and with those who share it. It is certainly not a place for contention, quarrel and conflict.

The Quranic message guarantees the safety and sanctity of the home in order to ensure the security and peace of those who live in it. None is allowed to enter a home unless he first seeks, and obtains, permission to do so. No one forces his way in, without justification, armed with the force of authority. No one watches those living inside, or spies on them, for any reason, to disturb their peace and undermine their security. To do so constitutes a breach of the sanctity which the Quranic message assigns to the home.

As the atmosphere in this passage is one of homes, shelter and garments, the chapter refers to some fitting aspects of the creation of animals, thereby providing harmony between the two constituents of the scene. *And God assigned for you your houses as places of comfort and rest and assigned for you the hides of flocks for your houses which you find light on the day of your departure and the day of your halting and of their wool and furs and hair— furnishing and enjoyment for awhile.* (16:80) We see how the sign highlights what is taken from animals to satisfy human needs. With furnishings, the chapter mentions, 'articles of convenience,' which in Arabic usage denotes cushions, mattresses and blankets. All these are meant to add to people's comfort and enjoyment.

In this atmosphere of peace and security the language used in the following sign flows easily to speak about shade, places of shelter in the mountains, and the garments people use to protect themselves against climatic conditions as also against opponents in war. *And God made for you shade out of what He created and made for you the mountains as a refuges in the time of need and has made for you tunics to protect you from the heat and tunics to protect you from your violence.* (16:81) When we have proper shelter, we feel safe, and when we seek security in the mountains, we are also able to relax. Again the garments mentioned in the chapter, providing two types of protection, give us a feeling of comfort and protection. All these feelings are akin to that of the comfort of one's own home. Therefore, the comment that follows at the end of the sign reminds people of their need to submit to God, their Lord: *Thus, He fulfills His divine blessing to you so that perhaps you will submit to God.* (16:81) Such submission gives us a greater feeling of safety and security.

God reminds people of all this making it clear to them that they should submit to their Lord who has created all these. However, peo-

ple turn away and take no heed. They should know that God's Messenger is responsible only for delivering God's message to them and he certainly fulfilled his mission. It is up to them whether they deny the truth which stares them in the face: *Then, if they turned away, for **you** is only the delivering of the clear message. They recognize the divine blessing of God. Again, they reject it and most of them are the ones who are ungrateful.* (16:82-16:83) They are certainly aware of God's favors, but they nevertheless refuse to acknowledge them. Most of them are ungrateful.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QURANIC CHALLENGES

Quranic references to concentrated and goal-oriented thinking provoked by the challenge to find something new or to solve a difficult problem (*tadabbur*) and the exercise of intellect occur in conjunction with basically five major themes:

Belief in the Oneness of God (*tawhid*)
Reflection on the Quran
The Human Being and the Universe
Historical Precedent
Thinking Itself

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to explain the obstacles to being a critical thinker to my classmate.

LESSON 70(12). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL STANDARD RIGHT JUDGMENT

The condition or quality of being true, correct, or exact; freedom from error or defect; precision or exactness; correctness; faithful representation of the truth.

QURANIC CHAPTER 16: THE BEE (AL-NAHL) SIGNS 16:84-16:89

Makkah: *On the Day We will raise up*
from every community a witness again,
no permission will be given to those who are ungrateful
nor will they ask to be favored. (16:84)
And when those who did wrong consider the punishment,
then, it will not be lightened for them
nor will they be given respite. (16:85)
And when those who ascribed partners
saw their ascribed associates with God,
they will say: Our Lord, these are our ascribed associates
whom we had been calling to other than Thee.
Then, they will cast their saying back to them:
Truly, you are ones who lie! (16:86)
They will give a proposal to God on that day of surrender.
Gone astray from them will be
what they had been devising. (16:87)
Those who were ungrateful and barred from the way of God,
We increased them in punishment above their punishment
because they had been making corruption. (16:88)
On the Day We raise up in every community
a witness against them from among themselves
and We will bring ***you*** *about as a witness against these.*
And We sent down to ***you*** *the Book*
as an exposition that makes everything clear
and as a guidance and as a mercy
and as good tidings for the ones who submit to God. (16:89)

COMMENTARY°

As the Last Hour when the Day of Judgement arrives is mentioned at the beginning of this passage, we are given here an idea of what awaits the ungrateful when it comes. (16:84-16:88)

The scene begins with the prophets being called as witnesses, giving their accounts of the treatment they received from their peo-

ples when they conveyed God's messages to them. The ungrateful will be standing there, not permitted to speak or make any plea or argument. They will not be allowed to make amends in order to satisfy their Lord, for it is too late to do so. It is a time for reckoning and the determination of fates. (16:85)

Their silence however is broken when they see gathered with them those so-called 'partners' which they used to allege to have a share in God's divinity, and to worship them instead of God or alongside Him. They point to them, crying out: (Verse 86) Their statement begins with an acknowledgement of God's position. They address Him as "Our Lord!" What is more is that they no longer describe the false deities they used to worship as God's partners. They refer to them as 'our partners'. Those very partners are frightened by such a description for it constitutes a serious accusation. Therefore, they refute it, asserting most emphatically that those who worshipped them are liars. (16:86) They turn to God in full submission. (16:87) Thus the ungrateful will discover that none of their inventions will be of any avail to them in their very difficult situation: (16:87)

The scene concludes with an emphatic statement asserting that those who tried their best to turn others from the path of faith will have their punishment increased: (16:88) Disbelief in God is corruption, and turning others from God's path is also corruption. These people are guilty of both offenses. Therefore, it is only right that their punishment should be increased.

This applies to all people and communities. The chapter then singles out a special situation involving the Prophet with his own people: (16:89) What a gloomy and fraught scene is chosen as the background: that of a pagan people looking on when the false deities they used to worship declare that they are liars, and those very deities declare their own submission to God, totally disowning their former worshippers.

Against this background, the Prophet's position is clearly stated. He will be the witness against his own people. This timely piece of detail adds power to the whole scene: *On the Day We raise up in every community a witness against them from among themselves and We will bring **you** about as a witness against these.* (16:89) The sign mentions then that the revelations given to the Prophet*: We sent down to **you** the Book as an exposition that makes everything clear and as a guidance and as a mercy and as good tidings for the ones who submit to God,* leaving no excuse for anyone to justify turning away from them. (16:89) This shows clearly that whoever wishes to follow right guidance and receive God's mercy should declare his submis-

sion to God before the arrival of that awesome and fearful day. For when it comes, no one will be given leave to justify his position or to make amends for past deeds. Thus we see that the scenes of the Day of Judgement given in the Quran serve a definite purpose endorsing the message given in the section where they occur.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

WHAT IS PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING?

Your teacher presents you with a problem, not lectures or assignments or exercises. Since you are not handed "content", your learning becomes active in the sense that you discover and work with content that you determine to be necessary to solve the problem. Your teacher acts as facilitator and mentor, rather than a source of "solutions".

Problem based learning will provide you with opportunities to:

* examine and try out what you know
* discover what you need to learn
* develop your people skills for achieving higher performance in teams
* improve your communications skills
* state and defend positions with evidence and sound argument
* become more flexible in processing information and meeting obligations
* practice skills that you will need after your education

WRITE A PROBLEM STATEMENT

A problem statement should come from your/the group's analysis of what you know, and what you will need to know to solve it. You will need: a written statement; the agreement of your group on the statement; feedback on this statement from your instructor. (This may be optional, but is a good idea).

Lesson 70(13). Critical Thinking Intellectual Standard Clarity (understandable, to be clear)

The word "clarity" or "to be clear (*bayan*)" occurs over two hundred times in the Quran. The Quranic message describes itself as having clarity or being clear, having clear signs, making things clear. The clarity in the Quranic message is to guide us to the distinction between truth and error. Clarity means to be understandable such that the meaning can be grasped; to be free from confusion or ambiguity, to remove obscurities. Clarity is essential as an opening or beginning or gateway standard because if a statement is unclear, it cannot determined if it is accurate or relevant. In fact, nothing can be determined about it because students may not as yet know what it means. They can only assume that we understand a thought when we can elaborate on it, illustrate it and give an example of it.

Quranic Chapter 16: The Bee (al-Nahl) Signs 16:90-16:100

Makkah: *Truly, God commands justice*
and kindness and giving to one who is a possessor of kinship
and He prohibits depravity
and ones who are unlawful and insolent.
He admonishes you
so that perhaps you will recollect. (16:90)
And live up to the compact of God
when you have made a contract.
And break not the oaths after ratification.
And, surely, you made God surety over you.
Truly, God knows what you accomplish. (16:91)
And be not like she who would break what she spun
after firming its fibers by taking to yourselves
your oaths in mutual deceit among yourselves
so that one community be
one that is swelling more than another community.
God tries you but by this.
And He will make manifest to you
on the Day of Resurrection
about what you had been at variance in it. (16:92)
If God willed, He would have made you one community,
but He causes to go astray whom He wills
and guides whom He wills.
And, certainly, you will be asked about
what you had been doing. (16:93)

Take not your oaths to yourselves in mutual deceit
among yourselves, that your footing should not backslide
after standing firm and you experience
the evil of having barred from the way of God.
And for you will be a serious punishment. (16:94)
And exchange not the compact for a little price.
Truly, what is with God is better for you
if you had been knowing. (16:95)
Whatever is with you will come to an end.
And whatever is with God is that which endures.
And We will, certainly, give recompense
to those who endured patiently their fairer compensation
for what they had been doing. (16:96)
Whoever does as one in accord with morality,
whether male or female, while being one who believes,
We will give life—this good life.
And We will give recompense to them
—their compensation—for the fairer
for what they had been doing. (16:97)
So when you recited the Quran,
seek refuge with God from the accursed Satan. (16:98)
Truly, he is not an authority over those who believed
and in their Lord they put their trust. (16:99)
His authority is only over those who turn away to him
and they, those are ones who are polytheists. (16:100)

COMMENTARY°

The new passage begins with a clarification giving some glimpses of what the Quran contains of clear guidance, grace and the good news it brings. The passage also includes orders to maintain justice and to act with kindness, particularly to relatives, and to steer away from indecency, evil and transgression, and to remain true to one's pledges and promises. It forbids going back on oaths once they have been made. All these are essential practices that we must maintain, as the Quran impresses upon us.

The passage also states that those who violate pledges or swear solemn oaths to deceive others will endure tremendous suffering. It also brings good news for those who persevere in the face of adversity. These will certainly be rewarded in accordance with their best actions.

It outlines some of the good manners which must be maintained when reading the Quran, such as seeking refuge with God against

Satan, so that he does not come near the place where the Quran is being read. It mentions some of the fabrications the pagans used to repeat about the Quran. Some plainly accused the Prophet of inventing it, while others claimed that a foreigner taught it to the Prophet. The passage concludes by stating the punishment for those who disbelieve after having accepted the faith, and the position of those who are compelled to declare their rejection of the faith while their hearts are full of the certainty of its truth. It tells us about the reward of those who are subjected to oppression on account of their faith, and who strive and fight hard, always remaining patient in adversity. All this serves as clarification, guidance, mercy and good news, as the last sign of the previous passage mentions.

It requires that justice should be established and maintained, because justice ensures a solid and constant basis for all transactions and deals between individuals and communities; a basis subject to no prejudice, preference or favoritism; a basis influenced by no family relationship, wealth or strength; a basis that ensures equal treatment for all and subjects all to the same standards and laws.

Along with justice, the Quran urges kindness, which relaxes the strictness of absolute justice. It lays the door open for anyone who wishes to win the heart of an opponent to forgo part of what is rightfully his. This means that the chance is available to all to go beyond strict justice, which is both a right and a duty, to show kindness in order to allow wounds to heal or to win favor.

Kindness has an even broader sense. Every good action is a kindness. The command enjoining kindness includes every type of action and transaction. It thus covers every aspect of life, including a person's relationship with his Lord, family, community and with the rest of humanity.

Perhaps we should add here that some commentators on the Quran say that 'justice' is the obligatory part, while 'kindness' is voluntary, but highly encouraged, particularly in so far as matters of worship are concerned. They say that this sign is part of the revelations received by the Prophet in Makkah, when the legal provisions had not as yet been outlined. But the way the sign is phrased uses both justice and kindness in their broadest sense. Moreover, from a purely ethical point of view, both are generally applicable principles, not mere legal provisions.

One aspect of kindness is 'generosity to one's kindred', but it is specially highlighted here in order to emphasize its importance. From the Quranic point of view, this is not based on narrow family loyalty, but on the Quranic principle of common solidarity which moves from

the smaller, local circle to the larger, social context. The principle is central to the implementation of the Quranic social system.

The sign proceeds to outline three prohibitions in contrast to the three orders with which it begins: *Truly, God commands justice and kindness and giving to one who is a possessor of kinship and He prohibits depravity and ones who are unlawful and insolent.* (16:90) Under shameful conduct everything that goes beyond the limits of propriety is included, but the term is often used to denote dishonorable assault and indecency. Thus it combines both aggression and transgression. Therefore, it has become synonymous with shamefulness.

'Depravity' refers to any action of which pure, undistorted human nature disapproves. The Quranic message also disapproves of any such conduct because it is the religion of pure human nature. Human nature can however become distorted, but the Quranic message remains constant, pointing to what human nature is like before distortion creeps in.

Aggression' in this context denotes injustice as well as any excess that goes beyond what is right and fair. No community can survive when it is based on the spread of shameful, reprehensible conduct and aggression. No community can hope to flourish if it does not stamp out shameful conduct, reprehensible actions and aggression. Therefore, human nature is bound to rebel against these whenever they are allowed to spread in society.

Human nature will not allow such destructive forces to remain in full play without staging a rebellion. This is inevitable even though such forces may be exceedingly powerful, functioning under the protection of tyrant rulers. In fact the history of humanity is full of such rebellions aiming to purge humanity of such parasites, in the same way that the human body mobilizes its defenses to expel any alien organism. The very fact that human nature rebels against them proves that they are alien to proper human life. While God enjoins justice and kindness, He forbids shameful, reprehensible conduct and aggression. This is in perfect accord with what pure human nature desires. It strengthens human nature and supports its resistance to such alien forces. *He admonishes you so that perhaps you will recollect.* (16:90) The admonition serves to awaken human conscience and support an undistorted human nature.

Fulfil your covenant with God whenever you make a pledge. Do not break your oaths after you have confirmed them, and have made God your surety. God certainly knows all that you do. *And live up to the compact of God when you have made a contract. And break not*

the oaths after ratification. (16:91)

Fulfilment of God's covenant includes the pledge Muslims give to the Prophet when they accept the Quranic message, as well as every pledge or promise that involves something permissible or encouraged. The fulfilment of promises and pledges ensures that trust is maintained in human transactions. Without such trust human society, and humanity generally, cannot have a solid foundation. The sign makes sure that those who make a pledge or a covenant are ashamed to break their oaths after having confirmed them, making God the surety for their fulfilment, and appealing to Him as their witness. This is followed by an implicit warning: *And, surely, you made God surety over you. Truly, God knows what you accomplish.* (16:91)

The Quranic message takes a very strict view on the question of fulfilling covenants, allowing no breach or violation under any circumstances. This is important because it constitutes the basis of trust in any community. Without strict fulfilment of covenants, the whole structure of the community collapses. The treatment of this point in the chapter does not stop at merely stating an order to fulfil all covenants and pledges and a prohibition of their violation. It goes further than that, showing the violation of covenants in a very bad light. It also dismisses every excuse people make to justify their going back on covenants: *And be not like she who would break what she spun after firming its fibers by taking to yourselves your oaths in mutual deceit among yourselves so that one community be one that is swelling more than another community.* (16:92)

A person who goes back on his pledges is shown like a stupid, imbecile woman who has no resolve. She spins her yarn and then breaks it leaving it in loose thread. Every little detail given in the example suggests shame and ignominy. The whole picture is meant to give a completely repulsive impression. No honorable person would compromise himself to look so idiotic as the woman who spends her life doing what is of no use and no value whatsoever.

Some people tried to justify going back on the covenants they had made with the Prophet Muhammad by saying that he and his companions were but a weak group, while the Quraysh enjoyed strength of numbers and position. The chapter makes it clear that this is no justification for making their oaths a means of deception, showing themselves ready to go back on them whenever it suited them: This is a clear order not to contemplate breaking pledges in order to gain favor with a community that may appear to be more powerful.

God wishes to test our resolve to honor our covenants so that we may prove our unwillingness to break a covenant when we have

made God their witness to it. *God tries you but by this.* (16:92) As for differences that may exist between nations and communities, these are left to God to resolve on the appointed day:*And He will make manifest to you on the Day of Resurrection about what you had been at variance in it.* (16:92) This statement serves to reassure the Muslim community as it resolves to honor its pledges to, and treaties with, communities that do not share its faith. *If God willed, He would have made you one community, but He causes to go astray whom He wills and guides whom He wills. And, certainly, you will be asked about what you had been doing.* (16:93)

The chapter places even greater emphasis on the fulfilment of pledges and the prohibition of resorting to oaths in order to deceive others, lulling them into a false sense of security in order to make transitory gain. It warns that the only result of such deception is to weaken the basis of social life and undermine bonds, commitments and beliefs. It warns against God's severe punishment in the hereafter. At the same time, it holds the promise of a much better reward which more than compensates for any trivial gain they may have had to sacrifice in honoring their pledges. It reminds them that what they have in this life is transitory, certain to come to an end, while that which God holds is inexhaustible, everlasting. (16:94-16:96)

When oaths are sworn only to deceive other people, the result is the weakening of faith in one's own conscience and giving to others a distorted image of it. Someone who swears in order to deceive others cannot have firm belief, and cannot walk firmly along its path. At the same time, he presents a bad image of his professed faith to those who trust him only to find themselves deceived. In this way, he sets a very bad example of believers, in effect turning others away from God's faith.

The Quran was able to make such a distinctly strong impression on Muslims through repeated warnings against violation of covenants, promises of reward for honoring them, and by making the covenant a bond with God. It shows the benefit that may result from such violation of commitment to be paltry, while God rewards generously those who are true to their word: *And exchange not the compact for a little price. Truly, what is with God is better for you if you had been knowing.* (16:95) The sign reminds us that what human beings may have is transitory, even though it may be all the property of one person. On the other hand, what is with God remains for ever: *Whatever is with you will come to an end. And whatever is with God is that which endures.* (16:96) Thus their determination to fulfil their commitments, even though they may be burdensome, is immensely

strengthened. Those who persevere in the face of difficulty are promised generous reward: *And We will, certainly, give recompense to those who endured patiently their fairer compensation for what they had been doing.* (16:96) The promise implies that their failings are overlooked, so that their reward takes into account only the best of their actions.

The next sign lays down a general rule about action and reward: *Whoever does as one in accord with morality, whether male or female, while being one who believes, We will give life—this good life.* (16:97) The first item in this rule is that the two sexes, male and female, are equal with regard to their actions and the reward they receive for them. They enjoy the same relationship with God and the same standing in His regard. Therefore, He rewards them equally, applying one measure to both of them. Although the term, 'whoever', with which the sign opens, includes both men and women, the Quranic statement emphasizes this by stating it very clearly: *And We will give recompense to them—their compensation—for the fairer for what they had been doing.* This equality is stressed emphatically in the same chapter that gives us an image of how Arab society based in tribal honor looked upon women.

It tells us how society looked down upon women, and the extent of the depression a father felt when he was given the news of the birth of a girl, leading him to hide away from his friends and acquaintances, because of the shame he felt.

Another aspect of this general rule is that good action must have a strong foundation, which must be faith. Without it, good action cannot be cemented into a well built structure. It remains haphazard, and it soon becomes like ashes blown in every direction by a strong wind. Faith provides the axis around which all bonds turn. It gives good action a motive and an aim. Thus it gives goodness a strong foundation so that it is not swayed by fleeting desires.

This general rule also makes clear that a goodly life in this world will not reduce in any way one's good reward in the life to come. Indeed the reward is based on the best actions believers do in this world. This implies, as we have stated earlier, that God will forgive them their sins. This is indeed the best reward to which human beings may aspire.

The chapter then speaks about the Quran and the values to be observed when reciting it. It also mentions some of the false assertions the ungrateful used to make about it. *So when you had recited the Quran, seek refuge with God from the accursed Satan. Truly, he is not an authority over those who believed and in their Lord they*

put their trust. His authority is only over those who turn away to him and they, those are ones who are polytheists. (16:98-16:100) Seeking God's refuge against Satan prepares the atmosphere such that it is more congenial for the recitation of God's book. It gives a sense of purity that strengthens the reader's bond with God, so that he is free from any other preoccupation, that is with any aspect of the world of evil that Satan represents.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

THINKING ALOUD

Think aloud about the problem we are faced with in these Quranic signs. Engage in thinking aloud to yourself. What is known as private speech never disappears. Whenever we encounter unfamiliar or demanding activities in our lives, private speech resurfaces. It is a tool that helps us overcome obstacles and acquire new skills.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confi dent you have learned.

When I focused on clarity, I began to notice when I was being unclear in communicating with others.

When I was reading, I began to notice when I was clear about what I was reading.

I focused on the four techniques of clarification:

1. Stating what I am saying explicitly and precisely (with careful consideration given to my choice of words);
2. Elaborating on my meaning in other words;
3. Giving examples of what I mean from experiences I have had;
4. Using analogies, metaphors, pictures, or diagrams to illustrate what I meant.

In other words, I frequently stated, elaborated, illustrated and exemplified my points.

LESSON 70(14). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL STANDARD FAIRNESS (RIGHT-MINDED)

Having fairness is described as in the Quran as having wisdom (*hikmah*). It is considered to be the ability to form judgments that are free from discrimination or dishonesty. Having wisdom in the Quranic sense is to have experience, knowledge and good or right judgment. Out of these develops a sense of impartiality so that we learn to weigh two differing points of view equally.

Developing a sense of fairness is the ability to make judgments free from discrimination or dishonesty. Having wisdom is to have experience, knowledge and good judgment. From this fair-mindedness or wisdom comes a sense of impartiality, that is, an inclination to weigh two views or opinions equally.

Using a sense of fairness when weighing two views or opinions helps us overcome any lingering egocentricity. We may have thought that we knew the truth only to find that we were wrong. We also learn not to judge any ideas until we are familiar with them and we have fully understood them.

Thinking critically, we are able to consider both the strengths and the weaknesses of differing points of view. We learn to put ourselves in place of others in order to understand them and what they are saying. We learn to overcome our self-centered point of view of identifying truth with our immediate perceptions or long-held beliefs. We gain the ability to accurately state the viewpoints and reasoning of others. We reason from premises, assumptions and ideas that are not our own. We can recall times when we were wrong but convinced that we were right. We begin to realize that our behavior and judgments affect others so that we learn to see things from another's point of view.

HISTORY

This was yet another falsehood the ungrateful tried to assert. (16:103) They claimed that the Quran was taught to the Prophet by a man whom they named. We have different reports about the particular person they mentioned. One report points to a foreign servant attached to one clan or another of the Quraysh who used to sell goods near al-Safa. The Prophet might have sat with him and spoke to him at times. But the man spoke a foreign language. His knowledge of Arabic was sufficient only to conduct necessary business transactions.

A report by Ibn Ishaq in his biography of the Prophet suggests that the Prophet used to sit at al-Marwah with a Christian servant named Sabiah, although some people called him Jabr. He was a slave owned by a man from al-Hadrami clan. Ibn Kathir, the historian, and other scholars like Ikrimah and Qatadah mention that the man's name was Yaish.

Another scholar and historian, al-Tabari reports on the authority

of Ibn Abbas, the Prophet's cousin, that the Prophet used to teach a slave called Balam who spoke a foreign language. The ungrateful used to see the Prophet leaving his place. So they came up with their ridiculous fabrication, saying that Balam taught the Prophet.

QURANIC CHAPTER 16: THE BEE (AL-NAHL)
SIGNS 16:101-16:110

Makkah: *And when We substituted a sign*
in place of another sign
—and God is greater in knowledge of what He sends down—
*they said: **You** are only one who devises!*
But most of them know not. (16:101)
*Say: The hallowed Spirit sent it down from **your** Lord*
with The Truth to make firm those who believed
and as a guidance and good tidings
to the ones who submit to God. (16:102)
And, certainly, We know that they say:
It is only a mortal who teaches him.
The tongue of him whom they hint at is non-Arab,
while this is in a clear Arabic tongue. (16:103)
Truly, those who believe not in the signs of God,
God will not guide them
and for them is a painful punishment. (16:104
Devising falsity is only by those who believe no.
in the signs of God.
And those, they are the ones who lie. (16:105)
Whoever disbelieved in God after his belief—
other than whoever was compelled to do it against his will
while his heart is one that is at peace in belief—
but whoever's breast is expanded to disbelief,
on them is the anger of God
and for them is a serious punishment. (16:106)
That is because they embraced this present life
instead of the world to come.
And God guides not the folk,
the ones who disbelieve, (16:107)
those are those who God set a seal upon their hearts
and upon their ability to hear and their sight.
And those, they are the ones who are heedless. (16:108)
Without a doubt they will be in the world to come,
the ones who are losers. (16:109)
*Again, truly, **your** Lord, for those who emigrated*

after they were persecuted and, again, struggled
and endured patiently.
*Truly, after that, **your** Lord*
is Forgiving, Compassionate. (16:110)

COMMENTARY°

The chapter also mentions some of the falsehoods the ungrateful circulated about the Quran: (16:101-16:105) The ungrateful do not understand the role of God's book and the fact that it has been revealed to establish a global human society and create a community to lead it along its way. They do not realize that it is the final message to come from on high to humanity. They are oblivious of the essential truth that God, who has created us, knows best which concepts, principles and legislation are best suited for humanity. When He abrogates a sign that has completed its purpose, He puts another in its place which is more suitable for the stage the new community has reached, and better suited for the long future, the duration of which is known only to Him. This is certainly His prerogative. The signs of this book may be likened to a medicine which is given in small doses to a patient until he is cured. Then he is advised to resume a normal diet which helps to protect his health.

But the ungrateful understand nothing of all this. Therefore, it is not surprising that they did not appreciate the purpose behind the abrogation of one sign by another and accused the Prophet of being a fabricator when he was indeed the most honest and truthful person they had ever known. Therefore, the sign comments: *And when We substituted a sign in place of another sign—and God is greater in knowledge of what He sends down—they said: **You** are only one who devises! But most of them know not.* (16:101)

The chapter then states the truth of the revelation of the Quran: *Say: The hallowed Spirit sent it down from **your** Lord with The Truth to make firm those who believed and as a guidance and good tidings to the ones who submit to God.* (16:102) It could not be a fabrication when it was brought down by the Holy Spirit, the Angel Gabriel (peace be upon him). He has brought it 'from your Lord', not from you, and this is done in truth', which means that no falsehood can ever be attached to it. The purpose of its revelation is 'to strengthen the believers,' who maintain the bond between God and their hearts. These realize that it has come from God to spell out the truth and make it clear for all humanity. It has another purpose as well, which is to provide guidance and good news to those who surrender themselves to God. *Say: The hallowed Spirit sent it down from **your** Lord with The Truth to make firm those who believed and as a guidance*

and good tidings to the ones who submit to God. (16:102) They are strengthened by the fact that they are guided along the right path, as also given the happy news of achieving victory and establishing their power.

We know full well that they say: It is but a man that teaches him [all] this. But the man to whom they so maliciously allude speaks a foreign tongue, while this is Arabic speech, pure and clear. *And, certainly, We know that they say: It is only a mortal who teaches him.* (16:103)

God answers all these fabrications with a simple, clear statement that ends all argument: *The tongue of him whom they hint at is non-Arab, while this is in a clear Arabic tongue.* (16:103) It is difficult to imagine that they were serious when they made such ludicrous claims. It was all most likely a part of their evil scheming which they knew to be absolutely false. They were fully aware of the merits of the Quran and its literary excellence. How could they claim that a man speaking a foreign tongue could have taught it to Muhammad. If such a man could have produced such a masterpiece, why would he not claim it for himself, without teaching it to another?

The Quran states the reason behind such false assertions: *Truly, those who believe not in the signs of God, God will not guide them and for them is a painful punishment.* (16:104) Those who refuse to believe in the signs given by God will not be guided to the truth concerning this divine revelation. Indeed God does not guide them t the truth concerning anything. This is the natural consequence c their unbelief and deliberate rejection of the message God's signs impart to them.

The chapter then makes it clear that false claims against God could not be made by Muhammad, whose honesty was exemplary. Such falsehood could only be asserted by people like them refusing to believe in God: *Devising falsity is only by those who believe not in the signs of God. And those, they are the ones who lie.* (16:105) Lying is a cardinal sin which no believer perpetrates. The Prophet himself made it clear that a true believer could at times commit some sinful action, but a true believer would never deliberately tell a lie.

The chapter outlines here the rulings concerning anyone who disavows faith after having accepted it: (16:106-16:109)

The early Muslims in Makkah were subjected to such brutal oppression as could only be endured by those who had made up their minds to sacrifice their lives in pursuit of a higher destiny in the life to come. Such people endure all the atrocities the ungrateful perpetrate against them, rather than revert to pagan faith.

The chapter paints in ghastly colors the crime of the person who reverts to unbelief after having known the true faith, declared his acceptance of it and experienced its blessings. Such a person only reverts to unbelief because he prefers the comforts and pleasures of this world to the happiness of the life to come. Therefore, such people are threatened with God's wrath and tremendous suffering, in addition to being deprived of God's guidance. They are described as heedless, as having sealed their hearts, ears and eyes, and as being certain losers in the life to come. The important point here is that faith must never be subject to bargaining or to a balance of profit and loss. When a person's heart and mind submit to faith, they do not admit any worldly influence. This world has its values and considerations, while faith has its own. The two sets cannot overlap or have anything in common. Faith must not be treated in a trifling way. It is not a bargain that you make one day and reverse the next. It is far more precious. Therefore, the crime is painted in such ghastly colors and the punishment is seen to be extremely stern.

The only exception from such condemnation is the one who professes, under utter duress, to have rejected the faith only to save himself from certain death, while his heart remains full of faith, certain that it is the truth. It is reported that this ruling was revealed in connection with Ammar ibn Yasir. Al-Tabari reports on the authority of Muhammad, Ammar's son, that the ungrateful in Makkah tortured his father, Ammar ibn Yasir, continuously until he gave in to some of their demands.

He then reported this to the Prophet who asked him: How do you feel deep at heart?

He said: My heart is full of faith, entertaining no doubt whatsoever.

The Prophet said to him: If they try again, do likewise.

This was a concession, and it applies to anyone in similar circumstances.

Yet many believers refused to satisfy their torturers, preferring to die rather than give in, even only verbally, to their demands. This was the stance taken by Ammar's own parents. His mother, Sumayyah, was so resolute in her resistance that she was stabbed with a spear in her vagina and died a martyr. His father also was tortured to death without giving in. Similarly did Bilal who was singled out for a special treatment. The ungrateful laid him down on the burning sands in the summer heat of Arabia and put on his chest a large rock and dragged him along, ordering him to reject his faith, but he refused and declared: He is only One God. He then said to them: Had

I known anything that would give you more displeasure, I would have said it.

But then, your Lord [grants forgiveness] to those who forsake their homes after enduring trials and persecution, and strive hard [in God's cause] and remain patient in adversity. After all this, your Lord is certainly Much-Forgiving, Most Merciful. One day every soul will come pleading for itself. Every soul will be repaid in full for all its actions, and none shall be wronged. *Again, truly, your Lord, for those who emigrated after they were persecuted and, again, struggled and endured patiently.* (16:110)

The reference here is to some believers who were among the weaker elements of Arabian society. They were subjected to great pressure and had to renounce their faith. However, they subsequently migrated and joined the believers when they had a chance to do so. They strove hard for the cause of the Quranic message, enduring much hardship along the way. The sign gives them the good news of God's forgiveness and an abundance of His grace: *Truly, after that, your Lord is Forgiving, Compassionate.* (16:110)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

HOW DOES OPEN-MINDED CRITICAL THINKING HELP?

- Refine/revise the topic either narrowing or broadening it according to outcomes of research.
- Rank or indicate the importance of three sources of research.
- Clarify any opinion, prejudice, or bias their authors have.
- While an opinion is a belief or attitude toward someone or some thing, a prejudice is preconceived opinion without basis of fact while bias is an opinion based on fact or research.
- Identify key words and concepts that seem to repeat. Is there vocabulary you need to define?
- Are there concepts you need to understand better?
- In reviewing your research, are there
  - Sequences or patterns that emerge?
  - Opposing points of view, contradictions, or facts that

don't "fit?"

- Summarize two points of view that you need to address.
- What questions remain to be answered?

Summary of critical thinking:

- Determine the facts of a new situation or subject without prejudice
- Place these facts and information in a pattern so that you can understand and explain them
- Accept or reject your resource values and conclusions based upon your experience, judgment, and beliefs

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I tested myself before I went to class by trying to summarize, orally or in writing, the main points of the previous class meeting because I realize if I cannot summarize main points, I haven't learned them.

I learned to test my thinking using intellectual standards: Being clear, accurate, relevant, precise, reasonable.

INTERLUDE 3: THE PROPHET VISITS TAIF AT THE END OF SHAWWAL 3 BH/619 CE OR FIRST OF DHU AL-QADA 3 BH/619 CE, RETURNS TO MAKKAH UNDER THE PROTECTION OF MUTIM AL-ADYY, DHU AL-QADA 3 BH/619 CE, MARRIES SAWDA BINT ZAMA AND IS BETHROTHED TO AYISHA

The Prophet began to look around him. Makkah would no longer be a safe place for him with the death of his protector. It was perhaps the will of God that help should come from some other people. Taif, almost sixty miles to the east of Makkah, was the nearest city of importance. It might be that God would turn the hearts of its inhabitants, the idolatrous Thaqifites, descendants from a common ancestor with the Quraysh, and use them as his instruments to chastise the Makkans, and establish his religion on the earth. To them, accordingly, he resolved to deliver his message.

Abu Talib had been buried hardly a fortnight when the Prophet, followed only by the faithful Zayd,[14] set out for Taif at the end of Shawwal or the beginning of Dhu al-Qada, 619 CE. His road (as far as Arafat it was the pilgrim's route) lay over dismal rocks and through barren denies for about forty miles, when it emerged on the crowning heights of Jabal Qura, with its rich gardens. Thence, descending through fertile valleys, the smiling fruits and flowers of which suggested perhaps the bright picture of the conversion of the Thaqifites, he advanced to their city.

Though connected by frequent intermarriage, the inhabitants of Taif were jealous of the Quraysh. They had a Lat, or chief idol, of their own. It might be possible, by appealing to their national pride, as well as to their conscience, to enlist them on the side of Islam against the people of Makkah.

The Prophet proceeded to the three principal men of the city, who were brothers and, having explained his mission, invited them to claim the honor of sustaining the new faith, and supporting him in the face of his hostile tribe. But he failed in producing conviction. They cast in his teeth the common objection of his own people, and advised that he should seek protection in some other quarter.

He remained in Taif for about ten days but, though many of the influential men came at his call, no hopeful impression was made upon them. Thus repulsed, he solicited one favor only, that they would not divulge the object of his visit, for he feared on his return the taunts and aggravated hostility of the Quraysh. But this, even if it had been possible, the men of Taif were little likely to concede.

For the first few days, perhaps, the common people regarded with awe the Prophet who had turned Makkah upside down, and whose preaching probably many had heard at the pilgrimage or, fairs. But the treatment he was receiving at the hands of their Chiefs, and the disproportion to the outward eye between the magnitude of his claims and his solitary helpless condition, turned

fear into contempt.

They were stirred up to hasten the departure of the unwelcome visitor. They hooted him in the streets; they pelted him with stones; and at last they obliged him to flee out of their city, pursued by a relentless rabble. Blood flowed from wounds in both his legs; and Zayd, endeavoring to shield him, received a severe injury in his head. The mob did not desist until they had chased him two or three miles across the sandy plain to the foot of the hills that surround the city. There, wearied and mortified, he took refuge in one of the numerous orchards, and rested under a vine.

THE PROPHET RESTS IN A GARDEN ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF TAIF

Nearby was a vineyard belonging to two of the Quraysh, Utba and Shayba; for the wealthy citizens of Makkah had gardens in the vale of Taif. They watched the flight of Muhammad; and, moved with compassion, sent Addas, their servant, with a tray of grapes for his refreshment. The servant, a Christian slave from Nineveh, marveled at the pious invocation with which the fruit was received by the weary traveller.

When the Messenger reached out for the grapes, he said: In the Name of God, The Merciful, The Compassionate and then ate. The Christian servant looked into the Messenger's face and becomes full of awe because he had never heard anyone in Taif say this. He broke the silence, and said: I have never heard the Name of God mentioned by anyone in this region.

The Messenger asked: Where are you from and what is your faith?

He said: I am from Nineveh and I am a Christian.

The Messenger said: You came from the same town as the God-conscious man, Jonah.

The young Christian was amazed. He said: How is it you have heard of Jonah?

The Messenger said: He is my brother. He had been a Prophet and I am also a Prophet.

At that, the young man embraced Islam.

O Lord ! I make my complaint unto thee of my helplessness and frailty, and my insignificance before humanity. But **You** are the Lord of the poor and feeble, and **You** are my Lord. Into whose hands will **You** abandon me? Into the hands of strangers that beset me round about? or of the enemy **You** have given at home the mastery over me? If **Your** wrath be not upon me, I have no concern, but rather **Your** favor is the more wide unto me. I seek for refuge in the light of **Your** countenance. It is **Yours** to chase away the darkness, and to give peace both for this world and the next. Let not **your** wrath light upon me, nor **Your** indignation. It is thine to show anger until **You** are pleased; and there is none other power nor any resource but in **You.**[3]

The owners of the garden watched what was happening from a distance.

They wondered about Addas and said to one another: Muhammad has changed Addas' beliefs.

When the youth returned to them, they both asked why he had embraced the faith of the man who had sought refuge with them. He said: There is no man greater upon the earth than he. He spoke of things that only a messenger of God could know.

They tried to convince him that he should keep his faith, but he had firmly embraced Islam.

THE JINN AT NAKHLA

Re-invigorated by the pause, he set forth on his journey homewards. About half way, loth to return to Makkah, he halted in the valley of Nakhla where was an idol-temple, a grove, and a garden.[16]

Notwithstanding the crowds of jinn here alluded to, Hisham states that they were seven jinn belonging to Nisibin, who happened to pass that way, and stopped on hearing Muhammad at his devotions reciting the Quran.[17]

Continuing this report, Ibn Ishaq says: When the Prophet despaired of receiving any good response in Taif, he returned to Makkah. When he was at Nakhlah, he stood up praying in the middle of the night. It was at this time that a group of the jinn—seven in number from the town of Nasibin in northern Syria—passed by and listened to him reciting the Quran. When he finished his prayer, they left hurriedly to tell their people. They believed in the Qurani message and God had revealed to the Prophet what had happened: *And whe We turned away from you groups of men or jinn who listen to the Quran, when they found themselves in its presence, they said: Pay heed. And when it was finished, they turned to their folk, ones who warn. They said: O our folk! Truly, We heard a Book was caused to descend after Moses, that which establishes as true what was in advance of it. It guides to The Truth and to a straight road. O our folk! Answer one who calls to God and believe in Him. He will forgive you your impieties and will grant protection to you from a painful punishment.* (46:29-46:31)

He also recited Chapter 72, The Jinn: *Say: It was revealed to me that a group of jinn listened to me. They said: Truly, we heard a wondrous Recitation. It guides to the right judgment, so we believed in it. And we will never ascribe partners with our Lord anyone. Truly, He, exalted be the grandeur of our Lord. He took no companion (f) to Himself, nor a son, and yet a foolish one among us had been saying an outrageous lie about God!*

But we, truly, thought that the humankind, nor the jinn would ever say a lie about God and that there had been men of humankind who would take refuge with the masculine of the jinn, but they increased them in vileness. And they thought as you thought, that God will never raise up anyone.

And we stretched towards the heaven. Then, we found it was filled with

stern guards and burning flames. And we had been sitting in positions having the ability to hear. But whoever listens now will find a burning flame and watchers for him. And we were not informed whether the worst was intended for those who are on earth or whether their Lord intended for them right mindedness. There are among us, the ones in accord with morality. And there are among us other than that. We had been of ways differing from one another.

And we, truly, thought that we will never be able to weaken God on the earth and we will never weaken Him by flight. So, truly, when we heard the guidance, we believed in it. And whoever believes in his Lord, he will fear neither meagerness nor vileness. And, truly, we are the ones who submit to God. Among us there are the ones who swerve from justice. And whoever submitted to God, then, those sought right mindedness.

As for the ones who swerve from justice, they had been as firewood for hell. If they went straight on the way, We would have satiated them with copious water so that We try them in it. But whoever turns aside from the Remembrance of his Lord, He will dispatch him to a rigorous punishment. Truly, the places of prostration belong to God so call not to anyone with God. And, truly, when the servant of God stood up, calling to Him, they be about to swarm upon him.

Say: Truly, I call only to my Lord, and I ascribe not as partners with Him anyone. Say: Truly, I possess not the power to hurt nor to bring right mindedness for you. Say: Truly, none would grant me protection from God—not anyone! And I will never find other than Him that which is a haven unless I be delivering messages from God, His messages. And whoever disobeys God and His Messenger, then, for him is the fire of hell, ones who will dwell in it forever, eternally.

Until when they saw what they are promised, then, they will know who is weaker of ones who help and fewer in number. Say: I am not informed if what you are promised is near, or if my Lord will assign for it a space of time. He is The One Who Knows of the unseen! And He discloses not the unseen to anyone, but a Messenger with whom He was content. Then, truly, He dispatches in advance of him and from behind him, watchers that He know that they expressed the messages of their Lord. He enclosed whatever is with them and He counted everything with numbers.

THE PROPHET'S RETURN TO MAKKAH

Near Makkah, he meets with three people, among whom is Mutim ibn Adiyy. Muhammad requested them to act as his protector against the hostile Quraysh. Without such a protector, it was not safe for him to enter Makkah. Among the three, only Mutim accepted Islam, gladly agreeing to the Messenger's request.

The Messenger had gone to Taif to seek tribal protection. It was not God's

plan that he should succeed here as His plan for the Messenger to migrate to Madinah will not take place for a few more months. However, God did not leave him without any success. The young Christian gardner, became a Muslim along with Mutim ibn Adiyy.

Mutim called his sons and told them to them buckle on their armor and take their stand by the Kabah. Muhammad and Zayd then entered Makkah; and, when they had reached the Kabah, Mutim stood upright on his camel and called aloud: O Quraysh! Verily I have given the pledge of protection unto Muhammad; wherefore let not any one amongst you molest him. Then Muhammad went forward, kissed the Black Stone, and returned to his house guarded by Mutim and his party.

There is something lofty and heroic in this journey of Muhammad to Taif; a solitary man going boldly forth in the Name of God—like Jonah to Nineveh—and summoning an idolatrous city to repentance and to the support of his mission. It sheds a strong light on the intensity of his own belief in the divine origin of his calling.

MARRIAGE TO SAWDA BINT ZAMA AND BETROTHAL TO AYISHA

Muhammad sought for solace in the midst of family Muhammad bereavement and public indignities, from a double matrimonial alliance. Sakran with his wife Sawda, both of Qurayshite blood, but of a stock remote from Muhammad, early became converts to Islam, and emigrated to Abyssinia. They had lately returned to Makkah, where Sakan died. Muhammad now made suit to Sawda, and the marriage was celebrated within two months from the death of Khadija.[18]

About the same time he contracted a second marriage with Ayisha, the younger daughter of Abu Bakr—a connection mainly designed to cement the attachment with his bosom-friend. There may have been something more than ordinarily interesting and precocious about the child, for the real marriage with her took place more than three years afterwards.

There is no information as to the terms on which Muhammad continued with the family of his deceased wife, Khadija; and whether he retained any part of the property that belonged to her. During the late few troublous years, and especially under the ban, it is probable that her wealth had much diminished. Perhaps it was shared with the poorer brethren. It is certain that during his remaining stay at Makkah the Prophet had not much property at his disposal. He appears still to have continued to live, at least occasionally, in the quarter, if not in the house, of Abu Talib where Abu Talib's daughter, Umm Hani, lived.

Repulsed from Taif, and utterly hopeless of farther success at Makkah, the fortunes of Muhammad were darkness, enveloped in thick gloom, when hope suddenly dawned from an unexpected quarter.

LESSON 70(15). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY

POINT OF VIEW (FRAME OF REFERENCE, PERSPECTIVE)

Human thought is relational and selective. It is impossible to understand any person, event, or phenomenon from every vantage point simultaneously. Our purposes often control how we see things. Critical thinking requires that this fact be taken into account when analyzing and assessing thinking.

HOW IS POINT OF VIEW (FRAME OF REFERENCE, PERSPECTIVE) DEFINED?

The point of view for this course on Quranic Studies is that of the Quran. All the words in the Quran are the Words of God as revealed to Prophet Muhammad. The Prophet related whatever was revealed to him through the Angel Gabriel (*ruh al-qudus*) with God's permission.

The Quranic point of view gives guidance to humanity through the prophetic mission, to bring people from the darkness of ignorance into the light of knowledge and wisdom. As 14:1 says: *This is a Book We caused to descend to you so that you have brought humanity out from the darkness into the light with the permission of their Lord to the path of The Almighty, The Worthy of Praise.* (14:1)

In the Quranic revelation, darkness is not just an individual's state of ignorance, but includes his worship of material gain in place of worshipping God, egoism, being a slave to his desires and being greedy, among other things.

On the level of society, darkness refers to injustice, oppression and/or discrimination and persecution as the sign to Moses (14:5) says: *Certainly, We sent Moses with Our signs saying: Bring out your folk from the shadows into the light and remind them of the Days of God. Truly, in that are signs for every enduring, grateful one.* (14:5)

The darkness here refers to the oppression and injustice of Pharaoh while the light is that of justice and freedom. The Quranic signs that refer to darkness or shadow and light always refer to darkness or shadow in the plural, while light is in the singular referring to the path of God-consciousness (*taqwa*).

QURANIC CHAPTER 16: THE BEE (AL-NAHL)

SIGNS 16:111-16:119

Makkah: *On a Day every soul will approach,*
disputing for itself and for every soul,
its account will be paid in full
for what it did they will not be wronged. (16:111)
And God propounded a parable of a town
—that which had been safe, one that is at peace,
its provision approaches it freely from every place.
Then, it was ungrateful for the divine blessings of God

and so God caused it to experience extreme hunger and fear
because of what they had been crafting. (16:112)
And, certainly, drew near them a Messenger from among them,
but they denied him, so the punishment took them
while they are ones who are unjust. (16:113)
So eat of what God provided you as lawful, what is good
and give thanks for the divine blessing of God if it had been
Him that you worship. (16:114)
He only forbade to you carrion
and blood and flesh of swine
and what was hallowed to other than God.
But if one was compelled,
without being one who is willfully disobedient,
nor one who turns away,
then, truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate. (16:115)
And say not to what your lying tongues allege:
This is lawful and this is unlawful
so as to devise lies against God.
Truly, those who devise against God
lies will not prosper, (16:116)
but a little enjoyment and for them
is a painful punishment. (16:117)
We forbade those who became Jews
what We related to you before
and We did not wrong them,
except they had been doing wrong to themselves. (16:118)
Again, truly, your Lord—to those who did evil in ignorance,
again, repented after that and made things right—
truly, your Lord after that is Forgiving, Compassionate. (16:119)

COMMENTARY°

Earlier in the chapter God gave two examples to drive home to people an important principle of faith. Now He gives another to portray the situation of Makkah and its pagan people who denied the blessings God had bestowed on them. The example serves to make clear what destiny awaits them if they persist in their attitude. The example highlights the blessings of abundant provisions, peace and security given to the city before mentioning the good and wholesome things they prohibit themselves on the basis of their pagan myths. In fact God has made these lawful to humanity. He has clearly outlined what He has forbidden, and it does not include the matters they prohibit themselves. This is an act of ingratitude to God, giving no

thanks to Him for His blessings. By adopting this attitude they lay themselves open to God's severe punishment.

As it outlines the foul things God has forbidden to Muslims, the chapter mentions the wholesome things God had forbidden to the Jews because of their wrongdoing. These were not forbidden to their forefathers at the time of Abraham who was a devout servant of God. These were indeed permissible to him and his offspring. Some were later forbidden to the Jews as a sort of punishment for their subsequent disobedience. Those who then mended their ways could receive God's forgiveness and mercy.

Then God revealed a new message to Muhammad as the final version of His faith. Thus all wholesome things were made lawful again. The same applies to the restrictions of the Sabbath, the day on which the Jews are forbidden fishing and hunting. The Sabbath applies to its own people who disagreed over it. Some of them obeyed the orders and refrained from doing what God had forbidden, while others transgressed and incurred God's punishment. They were sent to a depth far below that of human beings.

At this point the chapter comes to its close with an order given to God's Messenger to call on people to follow God's guidance. He should make his call with wisdom and goodly admonition, and with argument that is kindly. He is also told to maintain the laws of justice, replying to any aggression with similar measure, knowing that patience and forbearance are even better. The final outcome is indeed in favor of the God-fearing because God is with them, showing them the way to success, supporting and taking good care of them.

God cites the case of a town living in security and ease. Its sustenance comes to it in abundance from all quarters. Yet it was ungrateful for God's favors. Therefore, God caused it to experience the misery of hunger and fear for what its people used to do. There had come to them a Messenger from among themselves, but they denied him. Therefore suffering overwhelmed them as they were wrongdoers. (16:112-16:113)

This case is very similar to that of Makkah where God's sacred house was built. It was made a consecrated city where everyone could feel secure. No one was threatened, even though he might be guilty of murder. All enjoyed the security of being in the neighborhood of God's Inviolable House. People all around were threatened by all manner of dangers, while the people of Makkah enjoyed peace and security. Their provisions came to them easily from all over the world, carried by pilgrims or trade caravans which travelled in peace. Yet they lived in a barren valley with no cultivation or vegetation. Nevertheless, ever since the days of Abraham, they enjoyed a life of prosperity in addition to their security.

Then a Messenger came to them: A man from among them whom they knew to always tell the truth and to be exemplary in his honesty. They could find nothing wrong with his character. It was God who sent him as His Messenger, bringing mercy to them and to all humanity, preaching the same faith as that of Abraham, who built the Inviolable House of worship which ensured their security and prosperity. But they were quick to reject his message, levelling at him all sorts of false accusations, and subjecting him and his followers to persecution.

The example cited here by God is practically identical with their own situation: *And God propounded a parable of a town—that which had been safe, one that is at peace, its provision approaches it freely from every place.* (16:112) The result of these people's attitude is placed before their very eyes. They denied the Messenger God sent them: *Then, it was ungrateful for the divine blessings of God and so God caused it to experience extreme hunger and fear because of what they had been crafting.* (16:112) The inevitable result was: *And, certainly, drew near them a Messenger from among them, but they denied him, so the punishment took them while they are ones who are unjust.* (16:113)

The Arabic text brings this image to life by enhancing the effects of the hunger and fear, making them a garment to be worn, but then they are also made to 'taste' or 'experience' these to generate a more profound effect than that of the image of contact between skin and garment. The text highlights the response of different senses to enhance the effect of experiencing hunger and fear and how this affects the ungrateful. The chapter does this so that they may take heed and endeavour to spare themselves the same destiny which is inevitable if they persist in their wrongdoing.

In virtue of this example which highlights the blessings and the provisions given to them, and by contrast, the risks of restriction and deprivation, they are ordered to eat of the good things God has made lawful to them and to show their gratitude to Him. This is how to maintain the path of true faith, submitting totally to God alone and associating no partners with Him. It is when partners are associated with God that wholesome things are made forbidden in the name of such false deities: *So eat of what God provided you as lawful, what is good and give thanks for the divine blessing of God if it had been Him that you worship.* (16:114)

Now the chapter defines what is forbidden, listing the prohibitions in detail. The list does not include what the Arabs forbade themselves, giving these special names.

We note the exclusivity in the way the prohibitions are listed: *He only forbade to you carrion and blood and flesh of swine and what was hallowed to other than God.* (16:115) These are forbidden either because they are physically harmful, as in the case of dead animals, blood and pig meat, or because they are outrageous to faith or to mental well-being as when invoking a creature's name at the time of slaughter. *But if one was compelled, without being one who is willfully disobedient, nor one who turns away, then, truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* (16:115) This Quranic message is made easy, involving no affliction. If someone fears to die or becomes ill as a result of hunger and thirst, he may eat something of these forbidden items. We mentioned earlier the differences among scholars as to how much one may eat in such cases. The important thing is that one must neither transgress the principle of prohibition, nor exceed the limits of necessity that override the prohibition in order to permit what is normally restricted.

These are the limits of what God has prohibited or left lawful in relation to food. These limits must not be trespassed on the basis of pagan myths. No one can make a false claim describing as prohibited what God has permitted. Permissibility and prohibition are made by order from God, because they are part of legislation, which is the prerogative of God alone. Anyone who claims legislative authority for himself, on any basis other than God's orders, is an inventor of untruth. Those who invent anything without God's authority will never prosper:

Do not say — for any false thing you may utter with your tongues—that 'This is lawful and this is forbidden', so as to attribute your lying inventions to God. Indeed those who attribute their lying inventions to God will never be successful. Brief is their enjoyment [of this life], and grievous suffering awaits them [in the life to come]. *And say not to what your lying tongues allege: This is lawful and this is unlawful so as to devise lies against God. Truly, those who devise against God lies will not prosper, but a little enjoyment and for them is a painful punishment.* (16:116-16:117)

This is an express order that they must not describe anything as lawful or unlawful without appropriate warrant. When they say that something is lawful and another prohibited, without a reliable statement in support, they are stating a naked lie, which they falsely attribute to God. The chapter makes it clear that those who invent falsehood and attribute it to God will have nothing but brief enjoyment in this life. Beyond this, they will be made to experience grievous suffering.

Yet some people have the audacity to enact legislation of their own, relying on no valid text to serve as the basis of what they leg-

islate. What is most amazing is that they still expect to prosper in this life and in the life to come as well.

Beyond this, God has made certain prohibitions applicable to the Jews. But this was a punishment to the Jews in particular. It does not apply to Muslims. Now this chapter states: *We forbade those who became Jews what We related to you before and We did not wrong them, except they had been doing wrong to themselves. Again, truly, your Lord—to those who did evil in ignorance, again, repented after that and made things right—truly, your Lord after that is Forgiving, Compassionate.* (16:118-16:119)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What do you believe? How do you see things?
What reasons seem most persuasive to them?
What theory do you think best explains what their teachers are trying to explain?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

Remember what you said about these people before we studied them?
Which of our original beliefs were false or misleading?
Why did we think that way? Where did we get these ideas?
How do people come to think they know what other people are like before they know anything about them?
What false beliefs might other people have about us? Why?

LESSON 70(16). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY

THINKING INDEPENDENTLY

The Quran teaches us to think for ourselves when we read sign: *There is no compulsion in religion. Surely right judgment has become clear from error...* (2:256) that says that there is no compulsion in religion (*din*).

With this sign from God's point of view, we learn that it is up to each of us to have a close read of the Quran and decide whether or not to follow it. From reading the Quran with a critical mind, we learn how right judgment is clear from error. If we develop the following Quranic strategies or principles, and then practice the application of the principles, we will enhance our sense of intuition and insight. We will enhance our ability to reflect on our beliefs and actions. Quranic thinking encourages autonomous thinking, thinking for ourselves. We acquire many of our beliefs at an early age when we have a strong tendency to form beliefs for irrational reasons (because we want to believe, because we are rewarded for believing or punished for not doing so).

Quranic thinkers use critical skills and insights to reveal and eradicate beliefs to which they cannot rationally assent such as the beliefs of extremists. Quranic thinkers learn not to passively accept the beliefs of others; rather, they analyze issues themselves, reject unjustified authorities, and recognize the contributions of justified authorities. They thoughtfully form principles of thought and action; they do not mindlessly accept those presented to them. Nor are they unduly influenced by the language of another. If they find that a set of categories or distinctions is more appropriate than that suggested by another, they will use it. Recognizing that categories serve human purposes, they use those categories which best serve their purpose at the time. They are not limited by accepted ways of doing things. They evaluate both goals and how to achieve them. They do not accept as true, or reject as false, beliefs they do not understand. They are not easily manipulated.

Independent thinkers strive to incorporate all known relevant knowledge and insight into their thought and behavior. They strive to determine for themselves when information is relevant, when to apply a concept, or when to make use of a skill. They are self-monitoring: they catch their own mistakes; they don't need to be told what to do every step of the way.

The purpose or goal needs to be understood when you concern yourselves with accuracy and truth. You should ask yourself:

What evidence do I have to support this purpose?
How it can be explained to help others understand?
Can objections be raised from other points of view?
Are there any limitations to our point if view?

In the Quranic view, there is no compelling of ourselves or others to what-

ever it is that a person believes. This is what the Quran calls: "right judgment that is clear from error". It is free of being compelled to believe something.

It is possible to believe something because those around us believe in it or because someone has rewarded us for believing such-and-such. Or, it may be that our interests are best served by believing something or because someone is more comfortable believing this. It could also be that we believe in something because our ego and image of ourselves is defined by believing this-or-that. None of these reasons are that of a Quranic critical thinker because these reasons lack the evidence which the Quranic message provides. Each of us has to make up his or her own mind using 'right judgment' about what it is that we believe.

In order for students to be sure that their beliefs and actions are based on good reasons and evidence provided by the Quranic message, they need to be rational. They do this by critiquing their own irrationality which includes their own fears and desires. They are rational when they cultivate their desire for clarity, accuracy and fair-mindedness and, then, integrate them into their behavior and thoughts.

QURANIC CHAPTER 16: THE BEE (AL-NAHL)
SIGNS 16:120-16:128

Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (16:120)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (16:121)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (16:122)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (16:123)
Truly, the Sabbath was made
for those who are at variance about it.
*Truly, **your** Lord will give judgment between them*
on the Day of Resurrection about
what they had been at variance in it. (16:124)
*Call **you** to the way of **your** Lord with wisdom*
and fairer admonishment.
And dispute with them in a way that is fairer.
*Truly, **your** Lord is He Who is greater in knowledge*
of whoever went astray from His way.
And He is greater in knowledge
of the ones who are truly guided. (16:125)
Madinah (16:126)
Madinah (16:127)
Madinah (16:128)

COMMENTARY°

The restrictions of the Sabbath apply to the Jews only, who differ

on its details. It was neither a part of the faith of Abraham nor sanctioned in the faith of Muhammad who followed Abraham's footsteps. *Truly, the Sabbath was made for those who are at variance about it.* (16:124) Their case is left to God who knows the truth about all matters: *Truly, **your** Lord will give judgment between them on the Day of Resurrection about what they had been at variance in it.* (16:124)

The chapter has thus clarified what similarities may appear between the faith based on believing in God's Oneness as outlined by Abraham and perfected by the Quranic message, God's final message to humanity, and the deviant beliefs to which the Jews or the pagan Arabs adhered. All this is part of what the Quran has been revealed to set right. The Prophet is told to continue his efforts, calling on people to follow the divine faith, but utilizing wisdom and good exhortation, and delivering his argument in a kindly manner. If his opponents go on the offensive and act aggressively, the penalty should be of the same type as the aggression, or the Prophet may choose the better way of forgiveness and patience in adversity, despite being able to exact punishment. This is sure to bring him a better outcome. He need not grieve however over those who reject God's guidance, nor should he be afflicted by their scheming against him and his followers. *Call **you** to the way of **your** Lord with wisdom and fairer admonishment. And dispute with them in a way that is fairer. Truly, **your** Lord is He Who is greater in knowledge of whoever went astray from His way. And He is greater in knowledge of the ones who are truly guided.* (16:125)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Quranic content is understood by thinking, organized by thinking, analyzed by thinking, synthesized by thinking, evaluated by thinking, transformed by thinking.

You will learn that the Quran teaches you HOW to think through reading it, writing it, speaking it and listening (hearing) to it in any language with which you are familiar. Of course, it is best if this is done with the original Arabic revelation, but not knowing Quranic Arabic should not stop you from learning HOW to think Quranically. It is so powerful, it should come across

in any language in which it has been well translated, that is, a translation as close as possible to the original, but making sense (not a literal, word-by-word) or a wordy interpretation for each sign rather than a translation. In reading it, dialogue with it by asking yourself: What is the purpose of this passage? Do I understand what is being said? When I read these signs, I work on the text, take it apart, predict it, test it. It is a very difficult process, very labor intensive. This is close reading. What's worth reading is worth reading well.

Write out a part in your own words in order to better understand it, not, of course, to try to compete with it. Ask yourself if you can reformulate it, elaborate on it and give an example. Speak about it. To communicate well, you need to know your audience and what it is that you want to say. In order for listening (hearing) to be effective, it must be active.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I am able to raise basic issues.
I am probing beneath the surface of things.
I am discovering the structure of my own thought.
I am developing sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
I am arriving at judgments through my own reasoning.
I am learning to listen carefully to what others in my class say.
I am taking what others in my Quranic class say seriously.
I am beginning to look for reasons and evidence.
I am recognizing and reflecting on assumptions.
I am seeking examples, analogies and objections.
I am seeking to be empathetic to the Quranic point of view.
I am looking under the surface of things for the
meaning of the Quranic message.

QURANIC SIGNS REVEALED: NOAH (NUH)
SIGNS 71:1-71:20

Makkah: Book 25: Noah (71:1)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (71:2)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (71:3)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (71:4)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (71:5)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (71:6)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (71:7)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (71:8)

Makkah: Book 25: Noah (71:9)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (71:10)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (71:11)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (71:12)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (71:13)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (71:14)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (71:15)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (71:16)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (71:17)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (71:18)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (71:19)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (71:20)

QURANIC SIGNS REVEALED: NOAH (NUH)
SIGNS 71:21-71:28

Makkah: Book 25: Noah (71:21)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (71:22)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (71:23)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (71:24)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (71:25)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (71:26)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (71:27)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (71:28)

EPILOGUE
THE PROPHET MEETS A GROUP OF SIX MEN FROM MADINAH AT THE UKAZ FAIR, DHU AL-HIJJA 3 BH/619 CE

HISTORY

The time of the Ukaz Fair, Dhu al-Hijja 3 BH/619 CE, arrived. When God wished to display His religion openly and to glorify His prophet and to fulfil His promise to him, the time came when he met a number of the Helpers at one of the fairs.[19]

Asim ibn Umar ibn Qatada told me on the authority of some of the shaykhs of his tribe that they said that when the Messenger met them, he learned by inquiry that they were of the Khazraj and allies of the Jews. He invited them to sit with him and expounded to them Islam and recited the Quran to them.

Now God had prepared the way for Islam in that they lived side by side with the Jews who were people of the scriptures and knowledge, while they themselves were idolaters. They had often raided them in their district and whenever bad feelings arose, the Jews used to say to them: A Prophet will be sent soon. His day is at hand. We shall follow him and kill you by his help as Aad and Iram perished.

So when they heard the Messenger's message they said one to another: This is the very Prophet of whom the Jews warned us.

Thereupon they accepted his teaching and became Muslims saying: We have left our people, for no tribe is so divided by hatred ar rancor as they. Perhaps God will unite them through you. So let go to them and invite them to this religion of yours; and if God unit them in it, then no man will be mightier than you. Thus saying they returned to Madinah as believers.

There were six of these men from the Khazraj so I have been told. When they arrived back in Madinah, they told their people about the Messenger and invited them to accept Islam until it became so well known among them that there was no home belonging to the Helpers but Islam and the Messenger had been mentioned therein.[20]

The city of Yathrib (Madinah) had been long torn by internal war. The bloody conflict of Buath between the Madinah tribes of Khazraj and Aws a few years before, had weakened and humiliated the Khazraj tribe, without materially strengthening the Aws tribe. Assassination had succeeded to open fighting. There was no one bold or commanding enough to seize the reins of government; and the citizens, both Arab and Jews, lived in uncertainty and suspense. Little apprehension was felt from the advent of a stranger; even although he was likely to gain permission to assume the vacant authority.

Deadly jealousy at home, had extinguished the jealousy of influence from abroad.

Such was the position of Madinah. A tribe addicted to the superstition of Makkah, yet well Muhammad, acquainted with a purer faith, was in the best state of preparation to join itself to the Prophet. Idolatrous Arabs impressed with the indefinite anticipation of a Prophet, would readily recognize Muhammad as their Prophet. A city wearied with faction and strife, would cheerfully admit him to their hospitality as a refugee, if not welcome him to their counsels as a Chief.

Looking now to their acquaintance with the new faith, it may be remarked that the politics of Makkah, and the history of the Prophet, could not be unknown at Madinah. The Syrian caravans of the Quraysh not unfrequently halted there. Occasional intermarriages took place between the inhabitants of the two cities. Muhammad himself was descended from a distinguished woman of Khazraj birth, espoused by Hashim and a favorable interest, among that tribe at least, was thus secured.

Abu Qays, a famous poet of Madinah, had some time before addressed the Quraysh in verses intended to dissuade them from interference with Muhammad and his followers. The Jews were already acquainted with the Prophet as a zealous supporter of their Scriptures. Parties from Madinah went up yearly to the solemnities of the pilgrimage. A few had thus come under the direct influence of his preaching, and all were familiar with the general nature of his claims. To this was now superadded the advocacy of actual converts.!

This was to Muhammad a year of anxiety and expectation. Would the handful of Madinah converts remain steady to his cause? Would they.be able to extend that cause among their fellow-citizens?

APPENDIX 1: CORRELATION BETWEEN THE PRESENT ORDER OF CHAPTERS IN THE QURAN AND THEIR CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

1 = 96
2 = 68
3 = 73
4 = 74
5 = 1
6 = 111
7 = 81
8 = 87
9 = 92
10 = 89
11 = 93
12 = 94
13 = 103
14 = 100
15 = 108
16 = 102
17 = 107
18 = 109
19 = 105
20 = 113
21 = 114
22 = 112
23 = 53
24 = 80
25 = 97
26 = 91
27 = 85
28 =95
29 = 106
30 = 101
31 = 75
32 = 104
33 = 77
34 = 50
35 = 90
36 = 86
37 = 54
38 = 38
39 = 7
40 = 72
41 = 36
42 = 25
43 = 35
44 = 19
45 = 20
46 = 56
47 = 26
48 = 27
49 = 28
50 = 17
51 = 10
52 = 11
53 = 12
54 = 15
55 = 6
56 = 37
57 = 31
57 = 34
59 = 39
60 = 40
61 = 41
62 = 42
63 = 43
64 = 44
65 = 45
66 = 46
67 = 51
68 = 88
69 = 18
70 = 16
71 = 71
72 = 14
73 = 21
74 = 23
75 = 32
76 = 52
77 = 67
78 = 69
79 = 70
80 = 78
81 = 79
82 = 82
83 = 84
84 = 30
85 = 29
86 = 83
87 = 2
88 = 8
89 = 3
90 = 33
91 = 60
92 = 4
93 = 99
94 = 57
95 = 47
96 = 13
97 = 55
98 = 76
99 = 65
100 = 78
101 = 59
102 = 24
103 = 22
104 = 63
105 = 58
106 = 49
107 = 66
108 = 64
109 = 61
110 = 62
111 = 48
112 = 5
113 = 9
114 = 110

NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION TO QURANIC THINKING BY HASHIM KAMALI

1. The rough equation that earlier Muslim scholars drew between the Islamic and Western conceptions of reason tended to be oblivious of the categories of reason and the Western critique of reason that divided it into "instrumental reason, critical reason, functional reason, abstract reason, imperialist reason, decentering reason" and the like. For details see Abdelwahab M. Elmessiri, "Features of the New Islamic Discourse," a Cairo conference paper, 1997: http:// www.2lstcenturytrust.org/messiri.doc.

2. Some commentators have distinguished a total of 30 expressions that revolve around thinking over the *ayat*. See Abu Bakr al-Razi, *Tafsir al-Kabir* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1985), II, 222f.

3. Cf Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-'Ilm fi'l-Quran al-Karim* (Cairo: Maktaba Wahba, 1416/1996), 36.

4. Al-Isfahani, *Mufradat Alfaz al-Qur'an*, under "*Fikr*".

5. Cf., Karim Douglas Crow, "Islam and Reason" in *Al-Shajarah*, vol. 8, (2003),120-1.

6. Abbas Mahmud, "al-Agqad, Al-Tafkir Faridah Islamiyyah" (Thinking is an Islamic Obligation) quoted in Jamal Badi and Mustapha Tajdin, *Creative Thinking: An Islamic Perspective*, 2nd edn. (Kuala Lumpur: International Islamic University Malaysia, 2005), 6.

7. Cf. al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-'Ilm*, 41-45 quoting ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's *Miftah Dar al-Sa'ada*, and 'Agqad's book entitled *al-Tafkir Faridah Islamiyya* (Beirut: al-Matba'a al-'Asriyya, 1992).

8. Cf. al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-Ilm*, 200.

9. Cf .Ibid., 202.

10. Al-Raghib al-Isfahani, *Mufradat Alfaz al-Quran* (Beirut: Dar al-Shamiyya, 1383/1964), 249.

11. Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i, *al-Mizan fi-Tafsir al-Quran* (Beirut: al-Mu'assasa al-'Alami, 1383/1964) II, 395.

12. Ala uddin al-Mattagi al-Hindi, *Kanz al-Ummah fi Sunan al-Aqwal wa'l-Af'al* (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risalah, 1383/1981), hadith no. 5873.

13. Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali, *Risalat al-Radd 'ala al-Laduniyya*, ed. 'Abd Allah Riyad Mustafa, (Damascus: Dar al-Hikma, 1986), 241.

14. CE Ahmad Fu'ad al-Ahwani, *al-Tarbiyah fi'l-Islam* (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif bi-Misr, 1968), 227-228.

15. Cf. Aziz al-Azmeh, *Arabic Thought and Islamic Societies* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 109.

16. Cf. Diane F. Halpern, *Thought and Knowledge: An Introduction to Critical Thinking* (Mahwah: New Jersey, Lawrence Erlbaum and Associates, 1996), 21.

17. Cf. Ibrahim B. Syed, "Critical Thinking" as online at http://www.lrfi. org/articles/articles_101_150/critical_thinking.htm.

(18. Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Lahore: Shah Muhammad Ashraf, reprint 1982), 127.

19. Malik Bin Nabi, *Intaj al-Mustashriqin* (Cairo: Maktabah 'Amir, 1990), 34.

20. Iqbal, op. cit., 139.

21. See for details Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, *What's Right with Islam is What's*

Right with America (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2004), 4-5.

22. Georg W. H. Hegel, *Philosophy of History* (New York: Dove Books, 1956), 109.

23. Louay Safi, "The Creative Mission of the Muslim Minorities in the West: Synthesizing the Ethos of Islam and modernity," a conference paper presented at Westminster University, London, England February 21, 2004: http://insight.org/articles/Current/MuslimMinorities.htm.

24. Cf., M.H. Kamali, "Islam, Rationality and Science," in Islam and Science, vol. 1, no. 2 (2003), 126f, see also Mehdi Golshani, "Philosophy of Science from the Qur'anic Perspective," in *Towards Islamisation of Disciplines* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1989), 73f.

25. Cf. Ishfaq Ahmad, "Research and Development Culture in the Islamic World: Past and Present Problems and Future Directions," in Abu Bakr Abdul Majeed et al. (eds.) *New Knowledge, Research and Development in the Muslim World* (Kuala Lumpur: Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia, 2004), 14-15.

26. See for a discussion Oliver Leaman, "Institutionalising Research and Development Culture in the Islamic and Non-Islamic World: A Comparative Perspective," in Abu Bakr Majeed, (ed.) *New Knowledge*, 50-51.

27. Malik bin Nabi, *Intaj al-Mustashriqin*, 26.

28. See for details Mohammad Hashim Kamali, "Issues in the Understanding of Jihad and Ijtihad" in *Islamic Studies* 41 (2002), 623 ff.

29. There is a chapter on *ijtihad* in M. H. Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1991, 3rd edn. 2003). See also my article "Issues in the Understanding of Jihad and Ijtihad" in *Islamic Studies*, 41 (2002), 617-635; and "Issues in the Legal Theory and Usul and Prospects for Reform" in *Islamic Studies*, 40 (2001), 1-21.

30. Sergio Moravia. *The Enigma of the Mind: The Mind-Body Problem in Contemporary Thought*, tr. S. Staton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. First published in Rome, 1986), 4-5.

31. See for example, Howard Gardner, *Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligence for the 21st Century* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

32. See for details Roger Garudy, "The Balance Sheet of Western Philosophy in this Century" in *Towards Islamisation of Disciplines* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1989), 399f.

33. Mehdi Golshani, "From Knowledge to Wisdom: A Qur'anic Perspective," in *Islamic Studies*, 44 (2005), 13.

34. Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Fiqh al-Awlawiyyat*, 68.

35. Cf., Al-Ahwani, *al-Tarbiyah fi'l-Islam*, 189.

36. Mohammad Hashim Kamali is Professor of Islamic Law and jurisprudence at the International Islamic University Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur. "Reading the Signs," Center for Islam and Science. Gale Group, 2006.

NOTES TO THE TEXT, INTERLUDES AND EPILOGUE

1. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Science and Civilization in Islam.*

2. Ibid.

3. Abu Bakr al-Harithi informed us> Abu al-Shaykh al-Hafiz> Abu Yahya al-Razi> Sahl ibn Uthman> Abu Malik> Juwaybir> al-Dahhak> Ibn Abbas who said regarding 18:58.

4. The judge Abu Bakr Ahmad ibn al- Hasan al-Hiri related to us by dictation in Dar al-Sunnah on Friday after prayer, in the months of the year 410 AH> Abu al-Hasan ibn Isa Ibn Abdawayh al-Hiri> Muhammad ibn Ibrahim al-Bushanji> al-Walid ibn Abd al-Malik ibn Musarrih al-Harrani> Sulayman ibn Ata' al-Harrani> Maslamah ibn Abdullah al-Juhani> his uncle Ibn Mashjaah ibn Rubi al-Juhani> Salman al-Farsi said.

5. See Waqidi from Said Ibn Abbas.

6. See Mujahid.

7. See Ibn Abi Hatim.

8. See Mohammad Hashim Kamali Introduction to this book.

9. Ibn Hisham, p. 276; Tabari, i, 1199.

10. Ibn Saad, p. 141.

11. Ibn Hisham, p. 233; Tabari, i, 1170.

12. See *Book Year 3* for Chapter 38.

13. The tenth year of his mission (3BH) had not yet passed when Khadija died; and five weeks later he lost his protector Abu Talib also. Note: The authorities regarding these dates are contradictory. The *Kitab al Waqidi*, p 23 says that Khadija died after Abu Talib a month and five days: Ibn Qurtabi also, that she died after him three days. The authorities, however, give Ramadan 3 BH/619 CE as the date of Khadija's death, and Shawwal 3 BH/619 CE for that of Abu Talib.

The middle of Shawwal is the date generally agreed upon for Abu Talib's death (*Kitab al Waqidi*, p. 23); and the end of the same month of Shawwal, or about a fortnight later, as the period when Muhammad, downcast and distressed by the two bereavements, set out for Taif.

The interval between the two deaths is generally represented as thirty-five days. *Kitab al-Waqidi*, pp. 23, 40. In this view, it seems more natural to adopt the alternative that she died in the first half of Ramadan; that Abu Talib died in the middle of Shawwal: and that Muhammad, overcome by despondency at these successive bereavements, and by the renewed opposition of the Quraysh, set out for Taif the end of Shawwal.

14. Hishami, p 136 and Tabari, p 149 both say that he went alone, but Waqidi, p. 40 says that Zayd accompanied him.

15. Ibn Hisham, *al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah*, Vol. 11. pp. 60-63. Also, Ibn Sayyid al-Nas, *Uyun al-Athar*, pp. 231-233. Also. Adil Salahi (2002). *Muhammad: Man and Prophet*, Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, pp. 179-180.

16. Nakhla was a valley about half-way between Makkah and Taif. Its position is farther marked by the engagement of Nakhla in the sacrilegious war during the Messenger's youth. The Hawazin pursued the Quraysh from the Ukaz fair to this spot which was within the sacred limits around Makkah or at least close upon them.

17. Others say they were nine in number and came from Yemen, or from Nineveh. And it is added that they professed the Jewish religion. This, of course, arose from the reference made by them in the Quran to Moses.

18, If Khadija died in the middle of Ramadan, 619, he married Sawda in Dhu al-Qada upon his return from Taif.

19. Ibn Hisham p. 286; Tabari i, 1209.

20. See Ibn Ishaq.

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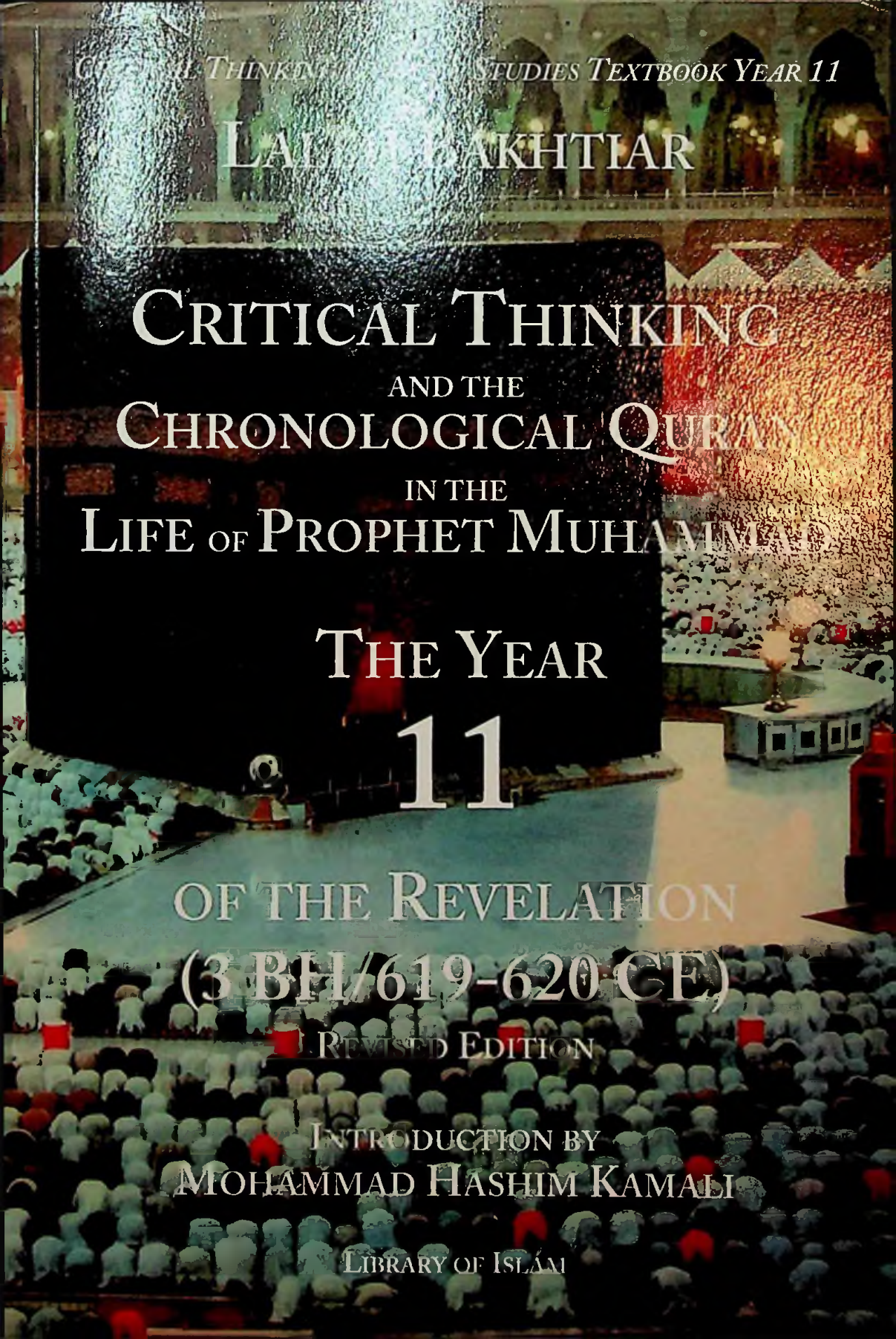
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PREFACE

THE CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STUDIES TEXTBOOK SERIES

There are thirty books in this series. Books entitled *Book Year 1* to *Book Year 24* consist of one book for each year of the revelation. The chapters' or sections' signs (*ayat*) are presented according to the 558 *ruku* or sections of the 114 chapters of the Quran. They each include the relevant chapter (*surah*) or chapters (when they are short) or sections, *ruku* (when there are multiple sections in a particular chapter) in chronological order. The chapters are numbered according to the chronological order of the Quranic chapters provided by al-Azhar University as the officially accepted order of revelation. Each section (*ruku*) is followed by a commentary by one of the well-known commentators.

Book Year 11, the present volume, covers events from Muharram 1-Dhu al-Hijja 29, 2 BH/August 18, 619 CE-August 5, 620 CE.

Books 25-28 are devoted to the Quranic stories of all other Prophets and Messengers in order of their dates. *Book 25: Adam, Cain and Abel, Enoch (Idris), Noah, Hud and the People of Aad; Saleh and the People of Thamud; Book 26: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Jacob (Israel), Joseph and Job; Book 27: Moses, Aaron, Children of Jacob (Israel), Jethro (Shuayb), Joshua, Khidr and Samuel; Book 28: David, Solomon, Elijah (Ilyas), Elisha (Alyasa), Jonah (Younis), Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl), Ezra (Uzayr), Dhul Qarnayn (Cyrus the Great or Alexander the Great), Luqman, Zechariah, John the Baptist (Yahya), Mary and Jesus.* The last two are: *Book 29: The Life of Prophet Muhammad from Birth to the Revelation* and *Book 30: Teacher's Manual.* The last, *Book 30,* has been prepared for the teacher's Lesson Plans.

At the beginning of each lesson, there is an exercise in critical thinking skills. These consist of one of the following: **The Nine Intellectual Standards, The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** and **The Seven Moral Traits**. The Eight Elements contain thirty-five strategies. However there is no specific order as to how they should be learned and incorporated into our thinking process.

Once we understand the critical thinking skills and then apply them to the signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. Once the skills as presented in the Quranic message are put into practice with the grace of God, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behavior.

Each lesson is followed by questions for classroom discussion or for dialogue. At the end of each lesson there is an assessment/assignment for students to use while they are developing critical thinking skills as they hopefully learn HOW the Quran teaches critical thinking.

SOURCES

The sources for the history include the works of Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hashim, Waqidi, Ibn Sad and commentaries by Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn, Tustari and Sayyid Qutb. The sources for the commentaries of Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn and Tustari have been used with the permission of the publisher, the Royal Institute of Ahl al-Bayt in Jordan. They are available on their website www.altafsir.com.

The inclusion of excerpted commentaries (tafsir) by Sayyid Qutb's In the Shade of the Quran (available online) in this Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series is because Sayyid Qutb is considered by some extremist groups as their intellectual source. By including excerpts from his eighteen volume Quranic commentary, extremists cannot disclaim the importance of learning critical thinking as this series is to help young adults learn HOW to think using self-realization (tahqiq) and critical thinking (furqan) skills taught by the Quran. This in order to arm young adults with the ability to choose reason over any irrational extremist ideology that is presented to them.

TERMINOLOGY

All Quranic signs are translations from The Sublime Quran. For the Muslim, the Quran is the Word (Logos) of God. It is this Word of God that has inspired artists, artisans, poets, philosophers and writers, those who had been the exponents of Islamic culture and civilization for almost 1500 years. Yesterday and today's Muslim wants to know more about each Word that God chose for His revelation through the Quran. This realization, in turn, prompted the translation of The Sublime Quran, an attempt to give the sense of unity within the revelation to a non-Arabic speaking reader.

There are several points to note about the terminology used in the translation of the Quranic text and the commentaries.

1. The blessed Prophet did not bring a new religion; he came to confirm what was right in the messages of the previous Prophets. Does this translation speak to the universality of the Quran? The Quran tells the Prophet, the mercy to all of humanity, to speak to people in their own language. Following his example, in addition to the translation being unbounded by time, in several sensitive cases, the word chosen to translate an Arabic word is also of a universal or inclusive rather than a particular or exclusive nature. This adds to the broadening of the perspective and scope of the Quran so that it becomes inclusive rather than exclusive to one particular group of people. In other words, in this way a larger audience can relate to its message.

2. The actual word "Islam" comes from the verb, "to submit" (*aslama*), submission (*sallama*), and ones who submit (*muslimun*). The Quran refers to itself (the Quran) from the very beginning of the revelation (68:35).

3. As previously indicated, the four books (Book 25, Book 26, Book 27 and Book 28) are the stories of the other Prophets and Messengers mentioned in the Quran. While these stories do have lessons to be learned by the Prophet

and those who heard the revelations as well as for us today, they do not refer directly to Prophet Muhammad and his prophethood following the beginning of the revelation. What remains in these books of the Quranic signs in the 24 years of the chronological Quran relate directly to him, what he did and what he was told to say. This allows us to understand his life directly from the Quranic message, the Quranic Sunnah, without any interruption of the stories about previous Prophets and Messengers.

4. Most English translations of the Quran refer to the "Children of Israel." The word "Israel" when used in the Quran refers to Jacob, the patriarch of the children who followed him such as Joseph. Therefore, it should be the "Children of Jacob" as it appears in these texts.

5. The words "*kufr*" and "*kafir*" have been translated here as "ingratitude" and "ungrateful" where the context allows. This is the first meaning of the word and many of us in our lifetime have met Muslims who are "ungrateful." It is the ungrateful Muslims who practice intolerance by declaring anyone who says: Peace be upon you (*as-salam alaykum*) as a non-believer (with what is called *takfir*). In those cases, it would not be suitable to call them "unbelievers" or "infidels," but it is clearly appropriate to refer to them as being "ungrateful" and this would include the early Quraysh, ungrateful for God's revelation and prophethood of Muhammad, who ridiculed the Prophet and fought against the Quranic message of love, forgiveness and peace.

6. Yet another example of the use of inclusive language in an attempt to speak to people in their own language, is the use of God instead of Allah. Many English speaking Muslims, as well as many of the English translations of the Quran to date, use Allah when speaking English instead of God. The intention on the part of the speaker is to maintain a sense of piety. They feel that using Allah in English moves them in that direction. Many even claim that the word Allah cannot be translated.

However well-intentioned a person may be, when speaking English, the use of the word Allah instead of God, first of all, does not follow the Quranic verse that tells the Prophet to speak to people in their own language. Subsequently, it does not follow the Sunnah of the Prophet who did speak to people in their own language.

In addition, it creates a divide between Muslims who use the word and the English speaking people of various faiths to whom they are speaking. In effect, it creates the illusion that there is more than One God—Allah and God. The response of the English speaking person of another faith is to say: I do not understand your religion; you have a different God than I do and you call Him Allah.

It needs to be clearly explained to English speaking Muslims that, unlike what they may feel, they do not have a monopoly on the word Allah. Arabic speaking Christians and Arabic speaking Jews also refer to God as Allah. The Old Testament and New Testament, when translated into Arabic, use Allah for

God.

English speaking Muslims, therefore, need to recall the message of the Quran that God is One (tawhid). In addition, the Prophet did not bring a new religion but confirmed what was correct in the messages of previous Prophets, namely, that God is One. Finally, they need to follow the example of the Prophet, as the Quran says he is the model or example to be followed, by speaking to people in their own language.

7. The Arabic language, much like old English, has the second person singular (masculine: anta (where the verb ends in *ka*). The English equivalent is the subject: "thou" or the object: "thee" or the possessive: "thy." As these are no longer in common usage in English, wherever the original Arabic uses one of these terms, the word "**you**" or "**your**" appear in bold font so that the reader knows the original was the second person singular. When the Quran is speaking directly to the Prophet, it uses the pronoun "thee" or "thou" so it is an important distinction to make.

Using you (second person plural) is done to help English speaking readers, recognizing that using the second person plural pronoun you (masculine: *antum* where the verb ends in masculine: *kum*) for God is to intimate that God is plural, the only sin in the Quran that is unforgivable. By putting the pronoun **you** in bold font indicates the true intention.

8. For the Arabic word "ayah," the English word used in these texts is "sign" rather than the Biblical term, "verse."

9. Several of the signs were abrogated over time. However the indication of a sign being abrogated was done after the complete revelation of the Quran. Whether or not a sign was later abrogated does not change the fact that the first Muslims who listened to the Quran, heard the signs that may have later been said to have been abrogated and that a hafez of the Quran recites all the signs as they appear in the original Arabic revealed to the Prophet. Whatever signs scholars later determined to be abrogated are still part of the Quran and, therefore, are not relevant to learning to be a Quranic critical thinker, learning HOW to think.

10. The first number that appears when the Quranic Chapters begin refers to the chapter number in the chronological order of the revelation so that Quranic Chapter 110 which was the last to be revealed is number 114 in the chronological order.

11. It is to be noted that whenever the name of Muhammad, Prophet Muhammad or the Prophet are used, one may say a silent prayer of blessings for him.

CRITICAL THINKING• COMPONENT

Quranic critical thinking (furqan, discernment) is a process that analyzes how we think. It is a 3-step process: **I**: Quranic critical thinkers apply the **Nine Intellectual Standards** (logic, being definitive, connected, appropriate, have worthiness, include numerous viewpoints, have right judgment, clarity, being fair and just) to: **II**: **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** (point of

view, purpose, questions, information, inferences, concepts, assumptions, implications): in order to develop: **III: The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** (belief in One God (tawhid), God-consciousness (taqwa), virtuous conduct (birr) or integrity through moral discipline, empowering constancy ('azm) and courage, persevering in goodness (sabara), love (hubb) or empathic altruism (ihsan) and being fair and just (rashad). The signs (ayat) in each section (ruku) teach any or every one of the **Nine Intellectual Standards** or any and every one of the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or any or every one of the **Seven Quranic Moral Traits.**

This is the key to critical thinking. We do not learn "what" to think, but, rather, "how" to think. Using the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** as an example, critical thinking can be summarized in the following sentence: Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** and consequences. We use **concepts,** ideas and theories to **interpret information** (data, facts and experiences) in order to **answer questions,** solve problems, and resolve issues.

The point of view in all cases is that of the Quranic message and the various individuals and groups that it addresses as this series is a course in Quranic Studies as well as a course in the chronological history of the life of the blessed Prophet (sira). Each student is encouraged to come up with his or her own questions and responses to those questions in order to learn how to become the Quranic critical thinker as the Quranic teaches us HOW to think.

It is important to note that there is no correct or incorrect answer. The important point is to go through the process with as many of the sections as one is able to do. Little by little, this will help each student or reader to develop into critical thinkers or "discerners" of the Quranic message creating a bond between them and the Quranic message.

Once we learn to analyze signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. It is important to note that the order of **The Nine Intellectual Standards** or **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or **The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** is not important. With the grace of God, once all are present, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behaviors.

THE NINE INTELLECTUAL STANDARDS

1. LOGIC (REASONABLE: 'AQALA, 'AQL)
2. DEFINITIVENESS (TO BE PRECISE: MUHKAMA)
3. CONNECTEDNESS (CONTAINING COMPLEXITIES AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS: (MUQTARIN)
4. APPROPRIATENESS (TO MAKE RELEVANT: SADID)

5. Worthiness (Focusing on the important, not trivial, to be significant: ahl)
6. Numerous or Multiple Viewpoints: 'dhara'a)
7. Right Judgment (rushd)
8. Clarity (understandable, to be clear: tabayyana)
9. Being Fair and Just ('aql, right-minded (rashad))

The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies

1. **Embodying a Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective (recollect, bear in mind, take for granted: tadhakkur)**
   - Thinking Independently
   - Developing Insight Into Ego-centricity or Socio-centricity
   - Exploring Thoughts Underlying Feelings and Feelings Underlying Thoughts
   - Developing Intellectual Curiosity
2. **Generating a Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective: (consider: ra'a)**
   - Clarifying Issues or Conclusions
   - Clarifying and Analyzing the Meanings of Words or Phrases
   - Reading Critically: Clarifying or Discerning the Sacred Text
   - Listening Critically: The Art of Silent Dialogue
3. **Raising Questions, Problems, Issues: (reflect: tafakkara)**
   - Practicing Discussion: Clarifying and Questioning Interpretations
   - Reasoning Dialogically: Comparing Interpretations
   - Reasoning Dialectically: Evaluating Interpretations Knowledge, Wisdom
   - Deep Questioning
4. **Using Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments (evidence: basirah)**
   - Developing Criteria for Evaluation: Clarifying Values and Standards
   - Analyzing or Evaluating Actions
   - Distinguishing Relevant From Irrelevant Information
   - Giving Reasons and Evaluating Evidence
5. **Making Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusion, Solutions (understanding: tabassur)**
   - Analyzing or Evaluating Arguments and Interpretations
   - Making Plausible Inferences or Interpretations
   - Recognizing Contradictions
   - Noting Significant Similarities and Differences
6. **Utilizing Concepts, Definitions, Principles, Models and Vocabulary (recall: idhdhakara)**
   - Comparing Analogous Situations: Reframing Insights to

NEW CONTEXTS
DEVELOPING ONE'S PERSPECTIVE: CREATING OR EXPLORING ARGUMENTS
MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS
COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE
THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING
7. MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PREPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED (OPINIONS: ZUNUN)
8. GENERATING IMPLICATIONS, CONSEQUENCES (PONDER, EVALUATE: TADABBUR)
GENERATING OR ASSESSING SOLUTIONS
EXPLORING IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES IN DETAIL

1. Embodying a **Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective** (Recollect, Bear in Mind, Take to Heart (*tadhakkur*)):Whenever we think, we think within a point of view. What is the Quranic point of view in these signs? Does the Quran follow universal intellectual values of clarity, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, logic, fairness?

2. Generating a **Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective** (Consider (*ra'a*)): My purpose in addressing the Quranic purpose in these signs is . . .? Know exactly what you are after. Make sure you are not operating with a hidden agenda and that your announced and real purposes are the same. Whenever we think, we think for a purpose. What is the Quran's fundamental purpose in revealing these signs? Are there multiple points of view?

3. Raising **Questions, Problems, Issues** (Reflect (*tafakkara*)): What is the key question I am trying to answer. State the question as clearly and precisely as you can. Details are very important.

4. Using **Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments** (Evidence (*basirah*)): Actively seek the information most relevant to the question. Include in that information options for action, both short-term and long-term. We use experiences, facts and data that the Quran gives us. What information does the Quran give in these signs? What information do I need to answer my question?

5. Making **Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusions, Solutions** (Understanding (*tabassur*)): After reasoning (discerning) the above points, decide what the best answer (conclusion) to the question is. What inferences, judgments or conclusions do these signs make? What are my most fundamental inferences or conclusions based on these Quranic signs?

6. Utilizing **Concepts, Theories, Definitions, Axioms, Laws, Principles, Models, Vocabulary** (Recall (*idhdhakara*)): The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are ... ? Figure out all significant ideas needed to understand and answer your question. You may need to analyze these concepts. Use a good dictionary. Inferences or conclusions are based on Quranic concepts and theories. What is the most basic concept in my question? What Quranic terms have I learned?
7. Making **Assumptions, Presuppositions, Taking for Granted** (Opinions (*zunun*)): Some important assumptions I am using in my thinking are ... ? Figure out what you are taking for granted. Watch out for self-serving or unjustified assumptions. The Quranic point of view is based on some assumptions. What assumptions is the Quran using in its reasoning? What assumptions am I using in my reasoning from the Quranic revelation?
8. Generating **Implications, Consequences** (Ponder (*tadabbur*)): Evaluate options. Take into account the advantages and disadvantages of possible decisions before acting? What consequences are likely to follow from this or that decision? The Quranic assumptions and my assumptions lead to implications and consequences. What are the implications of the Quranic reasoning? What are the implications of my reasoning? Am I correct in understanding the Quranic implications?

THE SEVEN QURANIC MORAL TRAITS

1. BELIEF IN ONE GOD (TAWHID)
2. GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (TAQWA)
3. VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE (MORALLY OBLIGATED: QANATA, GOODNESS, BIRR)
4. EMPOWERING CONSTANCY, COURAGE (AZM)
5. PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS (STEADFAST: SABARA)
6. EMPATHIC ALTRUISM (LOVE, MERCY, COMPASSION: HUBB)
7. FAIRNESS (NOT SELF-SERVING OR EGO-CENTRIC: 'AQSATA)

*****

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

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I am grateful to the work of M. M. Sharif, "Philosophical Teachings of the Quran," and B. A. Dar, "Ethical Teachings of the Quran," (indicated by * in the text) in A History of Muslim Philosophy and to my dearest friend, Khalida Rahman who has been supportive of my work for over twenty-five years.

My gratitude also goes to the Center for Critical Thinking and, particularly, the online work done in youtube videos and other works by the educator-founders-members of the Critical Thinking Community, namely, the late Dr. Richard Paul and his wife and constant collaborator, Dr. Linda Elder. All indications of • throughout the text refers to quotes or paraphrases from their excellent work as part of the Critical Thinking Community, www.criticalthinking.org. My attempt has been for all the quotes and paraphrases used here to follow fair copyright use.

Whereas Drs. Paul and Elder may not have used their work in religious educational settings, due to the separation of church and state in the educating of American students, learning from their works it became clear that their teachings can help Muslim students, as well, if their method is presented through the content of the Quran. If Muslim students come to understand that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking, that is, discernment (furqan), HOW to think, they will be armed with the intellectual skills they need to confront Islamic extremism.

One of the main scholars that Islamic extremists use in their propaganda is Seyyed Qutb. In order to further arm Muslim students for any confrontation they may have with Islamic extremists who would quote that their ideas come from Seyyed Qutb, I have used his Quranic commentary, In the Shade of the Quran, in Chapter I of this work. Students will learn how, contrary to what they may be told or taught, in many cases, Seyyed Qutb's commentary (indicated by °) speaks of and describes the way that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking and Islamic extremists cannot say that I have left out their scholars.

Last, but certainly not least, I wish to thank Kazi Publications and its founder, Liaquat Ali, for his constant support and encouragement to forge new areas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqli*) will be passed to young students as they learn of a Muslim world deeply entrenched in Islamic narrative sciences (*al-naqli*).

INTRODUCTION

READING THE SIGNS: A QURANIC PERSPECTIVE ON THINKING

BY MOHAMMAD HASHIM KAMALI

The Islamic notion of *aql* (intellect) embraces the faith dimension of knowledge that is also informed by ethical values. The prevailing reading of the Quran on rationality consists of a coalition of faith and reason which is also cognizant of the metaphysical aspect of reality and the limits, therefore, of human reason. This may be said to be a dividing line between the Islamic and Western conceptions of rationality, especially in its post-Enlightenment context.

Thus, it is not accurate to draw a direct parallel between them, as was the case in the Islamic discourse of the colonial period wherein many Muslim writers greatly admired the Western conception of rationality. The twentieth century Islamic discourse has shown awareness of that difference as it began to comprehend the subtleties inherent in the Western lexicon on rationality and its cultural overtones.[1]

THE DIVINE SIGNS (*AYAT*)

The Quran teaches an essential doctrine of the *ayat* (God's signs in the universe) functioning as pointers to the providential purpose at all levels of creation. Thus the Quran makes frequent references such as 'signs for a people who understand—exercise their intellect'. This evidential role of the divine signs entails an accompanying demand placed upon humans to engage in a rational understanding of the signs and draw conclusions on the discovery of truth and correct guidance.

The human reception of the signs, thus, depends ultimately upon the integrity of reason, without which humans would be incapable neither of comprehending the signs nor of responding to their message. The more abundant is an individual's native endowment of reason, the greater is the possibility for him or her to attain a larger magnitude of understanding and a higher level of response.

The nexus between faith and reason thus constitutes the hallmark of intelligent Islamic spirituality, wherein human intellect and emotions are guided toward harmony with one another. The Quran repeatedly provokes its reciters to think about the signs of God in the universe and within themselves, to understand God's illustrious presence in them, and ultimately to vindicate the truth. The word *ayah* and its plural *ayat* occur in the Quran over 400 times, although the whole of the Quran introduces itself as a collection of *ayat*. To quote the Quran: *We will cause them to see Our signs on the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is The Truth.* (41:53) And, *On the earth are signs, for the ones that are certain and in yourselves.*

Will you not, then, perceive? (51:20-51:21)

God reveals the truth in a variety of ways, some explicit and others by allusion, the latter mainly through the modality of the signs, in order to provoke and engage the human intellect. The signs of God cannot be readjust off the face of the signs but require thinking and reflection. This is indicated in the phrase: *We will cause them to see Our signs ...* which suggests that the signs may not be instantaneously visible to the naked eye. The whole concept of signs seeks to forge a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* (38:29) A sign is also a portent and allusion to something other than itself and should not therefore be seen as the final message and purpose of the revelation containing it.

Approximately 750 verses, or nearly one-eighth of the Quran, exhort the readers to study nature, history, the Quran itself, and humanity at large. The text of the Quran employs a range of expressions in its appeal to those who listen (*yasma'un*), those who think (*yatafakkarun*), those who reflect (*yatadabbarun*), those who observe (*yanzurun*), those who exercise their intellect (*ya'qilun*), those who take heed and remember (*yatadhakkarun*), those who ask questions (*yas'alun*), those who develop an insight (*yatafaqqahun*), and those who know (*ya'lamun*).[2]

These and their derivatives (mostly occurring in the active verbal form) consist essentially of open invocations and encouragement to thinking that is not limited by a methodology or framework. *Meditate they not, then, on the Quran* (*afala yatadabbarun al-Qur'an*) (47:24) *Tadabbur* means concentrated and goal-oriented thinking provoked by the challenge to find something new or to solve a difficult problem.

Quranic references to thinking and the exercise of intellect occur in conjunction with basically five major themes: Belief in the Oneness and generosity of God (*tawhid*); reflection on the Quran; the human being and the universe; historical precedent; and thinking itself.

References to *aql* (intellect) and its derivatives occur on 49 occasions in the text. The typical Quranic expression, *ulu'l-albab* (those who possess vision and understanding), and its synonym, *ulu'l-nuha* (people endowed with intellectual abilities) occur 33 times in the text. Such expressions are frequently juxtaposed with the exposition of signs, such as in the sign: *Thus, God makes manifest His signs to you so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (2:242) or in the sign: *Surely, We made manifest the signs to you so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (57:17). Repeated references to pondering over the signs are variously nuanced such that they embrace within their fold the widest spectrum of people who may be endowed with different intellectual abilities and endowments.[3]

Al-Isfahani defines thought (*al-fikr*) as the power of the mind that facilitates access to knowledge (*'ilm*). Thinking (*al-tafakkur*) is the movement of

that power which is driven by the intellect (*al-'aql*), and this can only occur when an initial image of the subject is attainable in the mind of the thinker. Thinking cannot, therefore, proceed over something of which no image exists in the mind. This can be said of the self of God, for example, as we have no image on which to focus our thought.[4]

The human being can only think over the attributes of God through the observation of His signs. Broadly speaking, thinking proceeds over the whole of the created universe without any exception; indeed, the Quran repeatedly invites such in respect to both the physical and abstract aspects of reality, both in the present and in regards to bygone history that is only perceived by the intellect rather than sense perception. Often the Quran gives examples, parables, and narratives of other nations, and then follows them with the reminder, usually addressed to the Prophet, to recount the narratives of the past so that the people may think and reflect over them:

And recount to them the tiding of him to whom We gave Our signs. (7:175)

And there are the parables that We propound for humanity so that perhaps they will reflect. (59:21)

Truly, in that are certainly signs for a folk who reflect. (30:21)

A hierarchy of five perceptive-cognitive functions is also suggested, including and extending through hearing, sight, thinking, dhikr remembrance, and certainty.[5]

Given such a scale of intensified perceptive understanding, the Quran propounds the notion of *ulul'l-albab*, the thoughtful individuals who are possessed of proper understanding and response. *'Aql* is thus tied to the cognitive dimension of faith.

Significantly, the very term for reason and intelligence in Arabic, *al-'aql*, has at the core of its basic meaning the practical idea of "restraining" and "binding," that is, of holding one's self back from blameworthy conduct—being an interior self-imposed limit. Quranic commentators understand thinking (*tafakkur, tafkir*) as pondering and reflection, which is a mental activity and process, not an outcome.

Thinking (*tafakkur*) is considered as a form of worship of God if it is done with sincerity and good purpose. *'Aql* in its Quranic conception is also one that conceives the truth, and it is always in search of it. This conception of *'aql* precludes one that is rigid, arrogant, and misleading. Some have also drawn the conclusion from the ubiquitous Quranic emphasis on thinking that all Muslims must strive to be thinking individuals.[6]

Al-Qaradawi has quoted Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's (d. 751/1350) own observation as well as some epithetic statements, the latter narrated from other leading figures to the effect that "thinking for an hour is better than worship of many years," and another statement that "thinking for an hour is superior to a whole night of prayer." To this Ibn Qayyim added that "thinking is the act of the heart whereas worship is the act of one's limbs, and the former is

superior to the latter."

The pious caliph Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz (d. 101/718) is similarly quoted: Thinking over the bounties of God is the best form of worship. Abbas Mahmud al-Agqad went so far as to say that: Thinking—*al-tafkir*—is an Islamic obligation. Just as God Most High ordered us to worship Him by performing prayer and fasting, He also ordered us to think in numerous verses and in so many different ways, all of which vindicate thinking as one of the cardinal messages of the Quran.[7]

The Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge espoused with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression *al-tafaqquh fi'l-din*, that is, understands the religion, signifying a rational and inquisitive approach to constructing a Quranic worldview.

Islam, in other words, advises analytical knowledge and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely dogmatic approach. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions: Faith based on detailed analysis (*al-iman al-tafsili*) as opposed to undigested and uncomprehended faith (*al-iman al-ijmali*). The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the religious scholars of all the leading schools of thought. Thus it is declared in a sign: *But a section of people only that they become learned in the way of life and that they warn their folk.* (9:122).

We also note the distinction between thought-based knowledge and transmitted or received knowledge reflected in the twin juristic and hadith-related expressions of knowledge based on understanding (*'ilm al-diraya*), and report-based and transmitted knowledge (*'ilm al-riwaya*). The former is based on understanding and insight (*diraya wa tafaqquh*) and takes priority over the latter. Whereas *'ilm al-riwaya* relies mainly on memory and retention, *'ilm al-diraya* is based on cognition, understanding, and analysis.

Thus, if there are hadith reports, or any factual reports for that matter, which do not stand to reason and understanding, they would be most likely discounted and abandoned, with the exception only of devotional matters (*'ibadat*) which are based on faith and submission more than on rational analysis.

Another feature of the Quranic vision of thinking is indicated in its emphasis on wisdom and good judgment (*hikmah*) which signifies the quality of thinking, its regard for values, and its outcome. Wisdom and good judgment can easily be said to be more important than technical know-how and expertise, as it can guide expert knowledge as to its proper application and the attainment of excellence.

The Quran mentions *hikmah* twenty times, and in about ten of these it is immediately preceded by the word Book or *kitab*, which is a reference to di-

vine scripture—primarily the Quran, but also other divinely revealed scriptures. The text, thus, says with reference to Jesus: *And He teaches him the Book and wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel.* (3:48) The juxtaposition of *kitab* and *hikmah* is often contextualized by a reference to the sending of prophets who teach the people and guide them with scripture and wisdom (e.g., *wa yu'allimuhum al-kitaba wa'l-hikmata*) as it is said of the Prophet Muhammad: *And teaches you the Book and wisdom* (2:159) and: *Teaches them the Book and wisdom* (62:2 ff); the descendants of Prophet Abraham: *We gave the people of Abraham the Book and wisdom* (4:54); and of Luqman: *We gave Luqman wisdom* (31:12). The holistic, superior, and indivisible value of *hikmah* in the Quran is underscored in one of its signs to the effect that when God bestows wisdom on someone that person is indeed granted an immense source of goodness: *And whomever is given wisdom, then, surely, was given much good and none recollects no doubt but those imbued with intuition.* (2:269).

To mention *hikmah* together with the Book evidently means that the Quran should be read with wisdom and divorcing the one from the other by taking a totally dogmatic approach to the Quran goes against the divine purpose and intention of its revelation. To read the Quran in the light of *hikmah* thus means a comprehensive reading that reaches beyond the obvious meaning of its words to encapsulate the goal and purpose of its message and then also reflection on the ways and means of how its benefits can be realized for the individual and society.[8]

The repeated juxtaposition of the "Book and *Hikmah*" in the Quran led some commentators, such as the Successor, Qatadah ibn Diama al-Sadusi (d.118 H), Ibn Wahhab, the disciple of Imam Malik (d. 179/795), and the Imam al-Shafii (d. 205/820) himself to the somewhat unusual observation that "*hikmah*" is a reference to the Sunna of the Prophet. Many have taken and followed this view; but since the text does not specify such a meaning for *hikmah*, the word should convey its natural and unqualified meaning as I have depicted in this presentation.

Good judgment, insight, balance and avoidance of extremes, the ability to distinguish between truth and falsehood, and procedural accuracy are commonly associated with *hikmah* and *hikmah* as such becomes a dimension of evaluative thinking in. its Quranic idiom. Besides, when the Quran declares that God Most High endowed the Prophets David and Solomon and also the renowned sage Luqman with *hikmah*, it could not have referred to the Sunna of the Prophet Muhammad, as Sunna as such did not exist in those times.

The Quranic usage of *hikmah* reinforces the holistic quality of thinking. *Hikmah* also seeks to forge a close tie between reason and emotion (*'aql wa qalb*) thereby encouraging what is now known as emotional intelligence. This is how the Quran and also the Sunna often deliver their messages, for, unlike the modern statutory laws and texts, the Quranic guidance, commands, and

prohibitions are often espoused with appeals to the heart and mind of their readers.[9]

Al-Isfahani defined *hikmah* as the realization of the truth through knowledge and intellect and it is manifested in the performance of benevolent deeds.[10] According to another definition: Wisdom signifies comprehension of the truth and reality and the ability to avoid corruption in one's quest to attain perfection."[11]

Random House Dictionary of the English Language similarly defines wisdom as: Knowledge of what is true or right coupled with just judgment as to action. Wisdom is thinking informed by the light of the heart that often leads o action and contemplates its consequences in relationship with other relevant factors. This may strike a note with the renowned hadith in which it is declared that: Fearing God is the pinnacle of wisdom (*ra's al-hikmati makhafat Allah*)."[12]

It is presumably for this reason that the great religions of the world have urged the seekers of knowledge to combine it with wisdom. It is wisdom that confers a higher quality on thinking and helps knowledge to be used for the promotion of good giving it meaning and direction.

In an effort to train the individual to enhance his or her quality of thinking, al-Ghazali (d. 505/1111) discusses the two sources of knowledge that Muslim tradition has recognized. One of these is through human teaching and learning (*al-ta'allum al-insani*) and the other through divine teaching (*al-ta'lim al-rabbani*).

The former is externally transmitted from teacher to student, whereas the latter is conveyed by the Universal Intellect which is superior, more intense, and more effective than human teaching. This knowledge is internally acquired either through revelation (*wahy*), which is a prerogative of the Prophets, or it is acquired through meditation, thinking, and reflection.

Al-Ghazali subscribes to the view that the essence of all knowledge is centered in the inner self of the human person in much the same way as growth potential that is vested in the soil and seed, and it is through teaching that the individual's potential is developed.[13] These two aspects of knowledge, that is, the external and the internal, are complementary to one another. This is because no one can possibly teach or learn from any teacher all the sciences, some of which are learned through teaching but the rest inferred by the reflective thought of the individual. It is therefore important that the avenues of learning remain open both through teaching and through inner reflection, thinking, and illumination. This is another way of saying that all knowledge is acquired and developed through the senses, inner reflection and thinking, both of which partake in natural endowment and development through external transmission and teaching.

Al-Ghazali's views on the internal and external sources of knowledge tended to correspond with those of Ibn Sina (d. 428/1037), but which differed,

at least partially, from those of the second/ninth century Ikhwan al-Safa (c. 373/983). All knowledge, according to the latter, is acquired through the senses and none inheres in human nature. Knowledge that is developed through thought and reflection also originate in the senses. The same analysis is extended to the axiomatic knowledge of postulates that are derived and confirmed through the senses. In support of this theory Ikhwan al-Safa have cited the Quranic verse: *And God brought you out from the wombs of your mothers and you know nothing.* (16:78). All knowledge is therefore acquired knowledge, a view which may strike a closer note with some of the modern theories on the subject.[14]

Muslim thought in the middle ages did not admit the ontological distinction between tangible entities that could be sensuously apprehended and entities of a spiritual or subliminal nature. This may be said to be a more sound and realistic view of reality than is allowed for by the modern positivist doctrines of science. Being is manifested at various levels and in several forms, none of which is less real than the other. Arabic thought employed the notions systematized in Stoic theory that divide being into three locations: Verbal utterance, psychic representation, and reality—without this last in any sense having exclusive title to Being.

Al-Farabi (d. 950 CE) took up this view and assimilated psychic representation to the entities of reason. Others rehearsed this division with the addition of a fourth location, that of Scripture. Reality thus had a four-fold manifestation, depending on whether the subject existed immediately in itself or whether its like was graven in the mind (*dhihn*, psyche) composed of sounds, which together indicates the psychic representation, or was manifested in characters standing for sound and speech. All four have a basic characteristic in common which is existence (*wujud, haqiqah*).[15]

The Islamic and Western perceptions of creative and evaluative thinking both recognize this to be a skill that is developed through training and controlled exercise. It is through training and thinking that we adopt new patterns of perceiving reality that we are able to see differently and creatively. It is generally acceded that creative thinking and critical thinking go hand-in-hand and complement one another. Critical thinking means "involving or exercising skilled judgment or observation." Thinking is critical when it evaluates the reasoning behind a decision. Such evaluation must, however, be carried forth in a constructive manner.[16]

The purpose of critical thinking is to achieve understanding, evaluate viewpoints, and solve problems. In general, one's thinking is likely to become critical when concrete learning experiences precede abstract thought.[17] This strikes a parallel note, in its Islamic idiom, with thinking that is espoused with *hikmah*.

The famous yet controverted hadith: The first (being) God created is the intelligence (*awwalu ma khalaqa Allahu al-'aqla*), sparked prolonged discus-

sions among Muslim thinkers over many centuries over the implications of this statement. Among the issues debated was the priority of reason over revelation and the respective role of each in their mutual inter-dependence.

Another issue was whether the disparity among humans in respect of reason also affected the modalities of moral obligation. Some prominent thinkers including Abu Bakr al-Razi (d. 313/925) apparently advocated the primacy of reason over the revelation. This would be properly known as "rationalism," which deems the primacy of reason over revelation. This is different from "rationality" which means treating any issue by using reason without giving reason priority.

SOURCES AND INSTRUMENTS OF KNOWLEDGE

Commenting on the Quranic passage quoted earlier, Muhammad Iqbal observed that the Quran regards both self (*anfus*) and world (*afaq*) as sources of knowledge. God reveals His signs in inner as well as outer experience. The Quran thus opens fresh vistas of knowledge in the domain of our inner experience. Mystic experience and intuition, then, however unusual and abnormal, must now be regarded as perfectly natural and open to scrutiny like other aspects of human experience." But inner experience is only one source of human knowledge. The outer experience in the Quran, Iqbal continues on the same page, unfolds two other sources of knowledge—nature and history, and it is in tapping these sources of knowledge that "the spirit of Islam is seen at its best".

The Quran sees the signs of reality in the sun, the moon, the alternation of day and night, the perpetual changes of the winds, the variety of human colors and tongues, and in fact in the whole of nature as revealed to the sense-perception of man. The Muslim's duty is to reflect on these signs and not to pass by them as if he is deaf and blind *They have hearts with which they understand not. And they have eyes with which they perceive not. And they have ears with which they hear not. Those are like flocks. Nay! They are ones who go astray. Those, they are the ones who are heedless* (7:179), for he who does not see these signs in this life will remain blind to the realities of the life to come. The divine signs are observed through sense-perception using mainly the faculties of hearing, sight, and intellect: *Journey they not through the earth? Have they not hearts with which to be reasonable or ears with which to hear?* (22:46) The emphasis in this sign is on the faculty of reason and understanding, suggesting that not all of our information about nature comes directly from sensation, for if that were the case we would be no different from animals.

Frequent references to sense-perception as the principal mode of receiving the signs show the scientific/experimental import of the Quran. The Quran goes even further to suggest sense perception as the only avenue of knowledge, as the text already reviewed provides: *And God brought you out from*

the wombs of your mothers and you know nothing. And He assigned to you the ability to hear and sight and mind so that perhaps you will give thanks. (16:78) Knowledge of the signs is therefore acquired through the use of these faculties. In another sign, the Quran praises those who listen to the word and follow the best of it: *Those who listen to the saying of the Quran and follow the fairer of it. Those are those whom God guided. And those, they are imbued with intuition.* (or make the best possible interpretation thereof) (39:18). This sign apparently subjects the data of sense-perception to the exercise of intellectual selection. The text also teaches that sense-perception does not perceive all reality: *So I swear an oath by what you perceive and what you perceive not.* (69:37-69:38). Certainty (*yaqin*) may also be beyond the reach of human intellect, as the human mind may be blurred by the variables of time and space. What is deemed certain today may be uncertain tomorrow.

We also note that according to the teachings of the Quran, the universe is dynamic in its origin, finite, and capable of increase. Early Muslim thinkers do not seem to have grasped the Quranic emphasis on inductive reasoning and experimentation. It was indeed a slow realization for Muslim thinkers to note "that the spirit of the Quran was essentially anti-classical". Putting full confidence in Greek reasoning, Muslim thinkers tried to understand the Quran in the light of Greek philosophy, which in the beginning of their careers they had studied with so much enthusiasm.

The substance of Iqbal's analysis on this subject is also upheld by Malik bin Nabi (1905-1973), who understands the creative impulse of the Quran as the motivating force behind the efflorescence of science at a time when Muslim thinkers began to grasp the full impact of the Quran on experimentation and inductive reasoning.[18]

The dynamic conception of the universe in the Quran is also seen by its conception of life as an evolutionary movement in time. History thus constitutes the third source of knowledge in the Quran. It is one of the most essential teachings of the Quran, as Iqbal has further observed, that nations are collectively judged, and suffer for their misdeeds here and now. The Quran thus constantly cites historical instances, and urges upon the reader to reflect on the past and present experiences of humanity: *Customs passed away before you. So journey through the earth; then, look on how had been the Ultimate End of the ones who deny.* (3:137)

If a wound afflicts you, surely, a wound afflicted the folk similar to that. And these are the days We rotate among humanity so that God knows those who believed and takes witnesses to Himself from among you. (3:140)

And: *And of whom We created there is a community that guides with The Truth, and with it, it is just. And those who denied Our signs, We will draw them on gradually from where they will not know.* (7:181-183)

The Quran's interest in history as a source of human knowledge extends farther than mere indication of historical generalizations. "It has given us one

of the most fundamental principles of historical criticism."[19] Since accuracy in recording facts is an indispensable condition of history as a science, accuracy depends ultimately on those who report them. The reporter's personal character is thus an important factor in judging his testimony. The Quran says *O those who believed! If one who disobeys drew near to you with a tiding, then, be clear so that you not light on a folk out of ignorance.* (49:6). It is the application of the principle embodied in this sign to the reporters of the Prophet's traditions out of which were gradually evolved the canons of historical criticism.

A scientific treatment of history, however, requires a wider experience, a greater maturity of practical reason, and a fuller realization of certain basic ideas regarding the nature of life and time. These are in the main three, and taken together they constitute the foundation of Quranic teaching.

(1) The unity of human origin: The Quran states: *He creates you from one soul.* (39:6) And: *O humanity! Be God-conscious of your Lord Who created you from a single soul.* (4:1). But the perception of life as an organic unity is a slow achievement. Islam sowed the germ of this aspiration and it became a Quranic assignment of us to work towards its realization. Notwithstanding the fact that Christianity, long before Islam, brought the message of equality to humanity, the Roman Empire had no more than a general and abstract conception of human unity.

On the other hand, the growth of territorial nationalism in Europe has tended to stifle the broad human element in the art and literature of Europe. European colonialism was also inspired by a self-image of superiority. Europe assumed a superior image that non-European peoples could be freely dominated, exploited, and subjugated.[20] It was quite otherwise with Islam. The impulse of Islam was from the outset to make the idea of human unity a living factor in the Muslim experience that was to be taken towards fuller fruition.

(2) A keen sense of the reality of time, and the concept of life as a continuous movement in time: The Quranic view of the alternation of day and night as a sign of the ultimate Reality which appears in a fresh glory every moment and the tendency in Muslim metaphysics to regard time as objective—all this constituted the intellectual heritage and ideals of Islam.

(3) The merger between religious and secular values: This is a unique feature of Islamic thought which is distinguished by its attempt to bring harmony between them, probably for the first time in history. It was in the state of Madinah that we encounter a clear example where universally proclaimed moral values formed the criteria of political judgment. Political leaders and statesmen were expected to recognize not only the value of efficiency, but also of justice, human dignity, equality, and freedom. In his renowned *Philosophy of History*, Hegel (1770-1831) recognized that the unity between the secular and the spiritual took place in Islamic society and civilization long before it made any impact in the modern West: We must therefore regard (the

reconciliation between the secular and spiritual) as commencing rather in the enormous contrast between the spiritual religious principles, and the barbarian Real World. For spirit as the consciousness of an inner world is, at the commencement, itself still in the abstract form. All that is secular is consequently given over to rudeness and capricious violence. The (Muslim) principle, the enlightenment of the oriental world, is the first to contravene this barbarism and caprice. We find it developing itself later and more rapidly than Christianity; for the latter needed eight centuries to grow into a political form.[21]

The modern West followed the example of the historical Islamic world in demanding that holders of political power operate under a set of moral rules. But as the modern West harmonized the secular and religious only nationally, the international realm was free to operate under the dynamics of power politics and secular rudeness. This failure was a cause of the senseless violence that claimed over 100 million war victims in the twentieth century. Recognition of the danger of the purely secular politics led to the creation of the United Nations, yet even this effort was undermined by political realists who enjoyed a disproportionate sway among the political pundits of Europe and America.

Safi has rightly noted the irony that contemporary Muslim societies have unfortunately followed a similar course in decoupling the secular and the religious and now find themselves entangled in a crisis of legitimacy. Many Muslim regimes are driven by the logic of power and operate outside the realm of moral correctness. It is alarming to see that this decoupling has impacted the religiously inspired movements, which seem to succumb to the logic of power in their readiness to employ amoral--even immoral--strategies in their fight against political corruption and oppression.[22]

OBSTACLES TO CORRECT REASONING

The Quranic emphasis on pondering over the signs is also underscored by a set of guidelines to ensure a correct outcome of reflection and thinking over them. The text thus draws attention to a series of exclusions and factors that stand in the way of the proper functioning of intellect:

(1) Pursuit of caprice (*hawa*) which may consist of love, hatred, pomposity and prejudice that confound impartiality and sound judgment: *Had you considered he who took to himself his own desire as his god and whom God caused to go astray out of a knowledge, sealed over his having the ability to hear and his heart and laid a blindfold on his sight? Who, then, will guide him after God? Will you not, then, recollect?* (45:23)

And if you had followed their desires after what drew near you of the knowledge, there is not for you from God either a protector or a helper. (2:120)

But if they respond not to you, then, know that they only follow their own desires. (28:50)

And: *And obey not him whose heart We made neglectful of Our Remembrance and who followed his own desires and whose affair had been excess.*

(18:28)

The choice is between two alternatives: caprice (*hawa*) and guidance (*huda*); the former evidently renders obscure one's attempt to attain the latter.

(2) Pursuit of conjecture in the face of certitude: And surely conjecture (*al-zann*) avails nothing against the truth (*al-Haqq*). *And most of them follow nothing but opinion. Truly, opinion avails them not against The Truth at all.* (10:36)

And follow up not of what there is not for you knowledge of it. Truly, having the ability to hear and sight and mind, each of those will have been that which is asked. (17:36) Knowledge and truth stand in contradistinction with the pursuit of conjecture. Note that the text says one should not follow conjecture until it is established and elevated to the rank of knowledge. It does not say that one should avoid conjecture altogether. In another place, conjecture occurs side by side with *hawa* or that which they themselves desire: *They follow nothing but opinion and that for which their souls yearn.* (53:23) This is the kind of conjecture or opinion that is meant.

Knowledge is established by sense-perception that often begins with a measure of speculation and doubt but which is affirmed by the light of reason and conviction. Some commentators maintain that the main context for this guideline is religion: Thus it is said that one should not take speculative positions in matters of belief. As for scientific enquiry and pursuit of knowledge, conjecture is neither discouraged nor avoidable.[23]

The ultimate purpose of this engagement is to attain the truth. Once the truth is attained, one should then commit oneself to it and observe it: *And what else is there after The Truth but wandering astray. Where, then, turn you away?* (10:32)

Completed was the Word of your Lord in sincerity and justice. There is no one who changes His Words. (54) (6:115).

(3) Blind imitation of others: The correct exercise of reason in Islam is tied to personal conviction as opposed to indiscriminate following of others, hallowed custom, and precedent. These must be judged in the light of reason and abandoned if found deviant and misleading: The misguided will say, as the Quran provides: *Nay! We will follow whatever we discovered our fathers were following on it —even though their fathers had been not at all reasonable—nor are they truly guided.* (2:170)

And: *Enough is what we found our fathers upon. Even though their fathers had been knowing nothing nor are they truly guided?* (5:104)

This was the response that Prophet Abraham and other great prophets received from their detractors, but the text address them again and again that both you and your ancestors were clearly misguided. *Certainly, We gave Abraham his right judgment before. And We had been ones who know of him when he said to his father and his folk: What are these images to which you be ones who give yourselves up to? They said: We found our fathers as ones who are*

worshippers of them. He said: Certainly, you and your fathers had been in a clear wandering astray.(21:51-21:54)

Forsake those who took to themselves their way of life as a pastime and as a diversion and whom this present life deluded. (6:70)

Is it that your formal prayer commands you that we leave what our fathers worship? (11:87)

As we shall presently elaborate, indiscriminate imitation of others is widely held to be the single most damaging cause of the decline of creative thinking among Muslims.

(4) Oppressive Dictatorship: The Quran takes to task arrogant dictators and those who support them and follow them. Hence the plea of those who say: *Our Lord! Truly, we obeyed our chiefs and our great ones. They caused us to go astray from the way* (33:66) should be of no merit. In a number of other places the text denounces the Pharaoh and Karun for their oppressive ways who misled their people in rejecting the guidance that was conveyed to them. *Pharaoh and his Council but they followed the command of Pharaoh. And the command of Pharaoh was not well-intended.* (11:96)

DECLINE OF CRITICAL THINKING

I shall not retrace well-documented history that Muslim thinkers were pioneers in the creation of new knowledge. It was due to the impact of the Quran that, in contrast to the Greeks who excelled in deductive method of reasoning and logic, Muslim scientists distinguished themselves in inductive and experimental approaches to scientific enquiry. The golden period of Muslim science started around 700 AD and lasted until about 1350 AD. Great thinkers such as Ibn Sina, Jabir ibn Hayyan, Abu Bakr Zakarriya al-Razi, Abu Rayhan al-Biruni, Ibn al-Nafis al-Dimashgi, al-Khawarizmi, and many others have left a rich legacy of contributions to the advancement of sciences in anatomy, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, optics, etc.[24]

After the fourteenth century creative thinking began to decline in the Islamic world due to a variety of factors, including the Mongol invasion and burning of Baghdad, the defeat of the Muslim Arabs in Spain and the continuing crusades, the collapse of the Ottoman caliphate, and the ensuing onslaught of European colonialism. The creative impulse of Islamic thought suffered setbacks as a result. Muslims were also beset with many internal problems including the alienation of philosophers, scientists, and thinkers from the theologians, sectarian controversies, and the prevalence of intellectual conservatism and imitation of past authority (*taqlid*)).

Philosophy and the sciences fell into a rapid decline while more rigid forms of instruction and narrower curricula prevailed. It was argued that orthodoxy was being threatened and that there was a need to restrain thinkers in order to defend religion. The latitude and diversity of discourse that expanded the scope of religious sciences, theology (*kalam*), commentary (*tafsir*), hadith,

and jurisprudence (*fiqh*) gave way to narrower criteria of *kufr*, *bidah*, and *taqlid* and the so-called closing of the door of *ijtihad* (*sadd bab al-ijtihad*).[25]

More recently, a certain abuse of Islamic authority operated by a dogmatic radicalism has exacerbated the decline of creative thought among Muslims. The situation is not helped by the prevalence of passivity in popular culture concerning the dogmatic excesses of these ardent proponents of imitation of past authority (*taqlid*). One of the salient features of this mindset is a certain ignorance of the essential impulse of the Quran on creative thought. Malik bin Nabi put it succinctly that the crisis of a civilization and a society at a critical point of its history "is not the paucity of its material objects but the poverty of its ideas."[26]

WHAT IS *IJTIHAD*?

The Quranic appeal to rational thinking and enquiry is not restrained by the methodology of *ijtihad*. There is, in fact, no clear text on *ijtihad*[27] in the Quran. *Ijtihad* as a concept originates in the hadith of the Prophet and the practice and precedent of companions. The methodology of *ijtihad* which is the basic theme of the science of the sources of law (i.e. *usul al-fiqh*) is itself a product of *ijtihad*. It seems that the Prophet also saw *ijtihad* as a creative impulse rather than engaging in the technicalities of legal reasoning—as the *usul al-fiqh* later developed in abundance. When the Prophet spoke of *ijtihad* or when he approved of its application, he seems to have done so in terms of *ijtihad* qua creative thinking.

One would readily admit that imposing restrictions on thinking, even if it were possible, by cultures and legal traditions could be exaggerated, in which case it would be prone to acquiring negative dimensions. One would not, on the other hand, advocate free thinking that is not limited by some kind of goal-orientation and values. Even the actual process of creative thinking, as earlier noted, is a skill that could be learned and refined by stages to direct it into productive avenues. The liberal tradition of the West tends to impose minimal restrictions on thinking whereas Islam tends to take a more guided approach to creative reasoning. Whereas both the Islamic and Western traditions recognize the authority of reason as a criterion of judgment, the liberal tradition has, unlike Islam, isolated spirituality and faith from the ambit of scientific rationality.

However, the methodology of *ijtihad* was also influenced in the course of time by a variety of factors, including the political climate, the change of caliphate (*khilafah*) to monarchy (*mulk*), Hellenistic thought in relationship to analogy (*qiyas*) and its syllogistic components, and the rift between the religious scholars and ruling authorities.[28]

Usul al-fiqh and its proposed methodology followed a difficult course and became embroiled in technicality that had adverse consequences for *ijtihad*. What is needed now is to recapture the purity of this vital concept, to

make *ijtihad* as our principal instrument for originality and healthy adjustment, but also to revise and reform some aspects of the theory of *ijtihad* itself that are no longer responsive to the prevailing conditions and challenges of our time.

I have elsewhere discussed the theory of *ijtihad* and its related issues and space here does not permit engagement in detail.[29] Yet I conclude this section by suggesting, however briefly, that the conventional theory of *ijtihad* needs to be revised and reformed in respect of the need:

1) to recognize the validity of collective and consultative *ijtihad* (*ijtihad jama'i*) side by side with that of *ijtihad* by individual scholars;

2) to allow experts in other fields such as science, economics, and medicine to carry out *ijtihad* in their respective fields if they are equipped with adequate knowledge of the source evidence of Islam. They may alternatively sit together with, or seek advice from, those learned in *Shariah*.

Ijtihad has in the past been often used as an instrument of diversity and disagreement rather than of unity and consensus. Although disagreement must admittedly be allowed in principle, yet there is a greater need today for unity and consensus. Scholars and learned bodies should not perhaps encourage excessive engagement in diversity of schools and sects but try to find ways that would help to close the gap between them and encourage unity on principles. This may require policy guidelines for different settings and countries, and, if so, that should be reflected in our approaches to *ijtihad*. Certain guidelines may also be provided by thinkers and leaders to stimulate consensus-oriented *ijtihad* within the ranks of the judiciary and legislative assemblies.

Ijtihad has in the past been conceived basically as a legal concept and methodology. Our understanding of the source evidence on *ijtihad* does not specify such a framework for *ijtihad*. Rather, we think of the original conception of *ijtihad* as a problem-solving formula for the problems encountered by individual Muslims and the Muslim community. This would confirm our view of the need to broaden the scope of *ijtihad* to other disciplines beyond the framework of *fiqh* and *usul al-fiqh*.

According to a legal maxim of Islamic jurisprudence, there should be no *ijtihad* in the presence of a clear text of the Quran and Hadith (*la ijtihad ma'al-nass*). This maxim should also be revised. This is because of the possibility that the text in question could now be seen in a different light and given a fresh interpretation in a different context. What we are saying is that the legal text may need to be understood first and that by itself may involve *ijtihad*. Hence *ijtihad* may not be precluded if it could advance a fresh understanding of the text in the first place.

The persistent decline of critical reason among Muslims is due partly to the notion that the exercise of personal judgment and *ijtihad* ceased with the epoch-making works of the legists and imams of the past. Added to this is the prevailing mindset that a Muslim should follow one or the other of the estab-

lished schools of thought and abandon his judgment in favor of interpretations of the earlier centuries whose originators could have no conception of the necessities of the twenty-first century Muslims. Until about 1500 CE, independent *ijtihad* allowed Muslims and Muslim societies to continually adapt in the face of changing societal conditions and new advances in knowledge.

Unfortunately, as Muslim civilization began to weaken about four centuries ago in the face of Western advances, Muslims began to adopt a more conservative stance in an attempt to preserve traditional values and institutions. As a result Muslim thinkers became inclined to view innovation and adaptation negatively. For all the rhetoric and symbolic form of the neo-radicals that tend to dominate the audience of Muslims, the spirit of Islam is often palpably missing from their endeavors, while more than ever *ijtihad* is needed where women, education, and politics are concerned.

ISLAM AND THE WEST

Scientific rationality essentially reduces intelligence to the level of neural chemistry where mental and behavioral phenomena are understood merely as manifestations of physical processes. It tends to deprive us of our noblest dimensions (faith, love, beauty), separates the soul from the body, and the sensory from the intelligible. In the realm of economics, we are merely a producer and consumer of goods and is moved solely by our individual self-interest. This too is opposed to the Islamic viewpoint which also sees in us morality and transcendent faith.

This physicalist analysis of intelligence is now increasingly being seen as conceptually inadequate. The real question is whether one may admit a human dimension which is autonomous and irreducible to a physical mass. In Moravia's phrase "can one posit something which exists and yet at the same time is non physical? Do the rejection of the soul and the achievements attained by bio and neurosciences oblige us to hold that man is nothing but body?"[30] Recently these have been attempted by some creative thinkers to reconceptualize intentions of 'reason' and 'intelligence' along anti-materialistic lines drawing on the experience of older non-Western traditions, or even popular folk conceptions.[31]

Islamic philosophy—which mainly studies purposes, as against science which mainly studies causes—sees, in line with the Quranic teaching, the role of objects and events as signs of divine presence and action. Faith is understood by Muslims not as a limitation on science but as its vista for enrichment and perfection.[32]

The variant perspectives of Western philosophy and science are also behind the Western puzzlement why Muslims have not become more secularized. This unwarranted assumption has in the past led to mistaken assessments of Islam and continues to foster genuine misunderstanding concerning the real nature of Islamic religion and intellectual traditions. The misunderstanding is

unfortunately not unique to Westerners. For the majority of Muslims today are also woefully uninformed of the depth and scope of their rich heritage on the authoritative validity of reason. Thinking Muslims should work to vindicate the symbiotic relation of faith and reason in their religion and see it as a source of enrichment and contribution of Islam to human understanding and civilization.

CONCLUSION

This essay advanced a Quranic perspective on thinking, which is affirmative in critical and goal-oriented thinking and also provides a set of guidelines that ensures its purity and purpose from negative reductionist influences. The guidelines so provided are also rich in advancing a spiritual dimension with the understanding that thinking which is not informed by morality and faith can lose its direction and purpose and can even become harmful to human welfare. From the Quranic vantage point, the sciences of nature should be key to our cognition of the signs of God in the universe. For this may be instrumental in solving individual and social problems without interrupting the cosmic order and the human habitat on earth. The blatant disregard of ethical values in science has weakened scientists' sense of responsibility and contributed to the degradation of the human condition on the globe.

Since thinking is a skill that can be advanced by self-application and training, it is amenable to guidance, bereavement, and enrichment. Universities and institutions of learning in Muslim countries are generally short of resources, and those who have the means still fall short, to their detriment, of nurturing the culture of reading and research among their students and scholars. Centers of higher learning may do well to establish a new order of relationship between the natural sciences and humanities, and between all fields of knowledge and human welfare and also the avenues of benefit to society. The present-day education system is due for a reappraisal in order to instill creative thinking and breadth of vision among students and scholars that is informed by the inter-relatedness of the various disciplines of learning. This could be done, as one observer suggested, "by adding sufficient number of courses in humanities to the science and engineering curricula, by cross-disciplinary interaction and collaboration."[33] The main characteristic of the human sciences, from the Islamic perspective, is that they are not value-free and have to be incorporated within the value system of Islam that is informed by the ethical and human dimension of values.

It is ironic to note, however, that the vast majority of Muslims are wont to rote reading of the Quran which is patently vacuous and devoid of thinking. The Quran is usually read, committed to memory, and cited for its spiritual merit rather than intellectual stimulation and enrichment. This is evidently not the advice one obtains from the Quran itself Al-Qaradawi has rightly observed about the current realities of public education in Muslim countries that "the

system relies on memorization and cramming more than it does on comprehension and analysis. A typical weakness of this method is that the memorizer forgets as soon as the exams are over. But if what is learned is founded in understanding and comprehension, its substance will remain in the mind and will not be prone to oblivion so quickly."[34]

But the issue that we raise here is well-entrenched and originates in the overall emphasis that most educationists and jurists of earlier times have placed on the study of the Quran, Hadith and *fiqh* manuals, often calling attention to words and sentences of the text at the expense of comprehension and analysis. The basic approach to Quran studies thus emphasized correct pronunciation and memorization. This repetitive system of learning was particularly pronounced in the context of child education, although it was not confined to this framework as other and more advanced levels of Islamic scholarship also bore the same influence.[35]

Notwithstanding the profound influence of the Quran on the thoughts, mores, and cultures of Muslim individuals and societies, thinking by its nature does not lend itself to any predetermined framework and guideline. It seems that the Quran also seeks only to provide signs and signposts on thinking, but the subjective and innately individual bent of thinking is often inspired by imagination and insight which cannot be encapsulated by definitions and guidelines. A creative mind is unique by its attributes, and thinking that originates in a learned and upright individual is one of the greatest gifts of creation that can itself fit the description of divine example, or sign, of God on earth.

It remains to be added though that imaginative thinking has also been sparkled by sources and influences among great Muslim thinkers of other cultures and traditions—just as we note also that the great thinkers of history emerged in all regions, cultures, and religions. The substance of these statements is upheld in a renowned Hadith in which the Prophet instructed the Muslims to "seek knowledge, even unto China," and in another Hadith that "wisdom is the lost property of the believer; he is entitled to it wherever he finds it."

Knowledge and wisdom must therefore be ultimately seen as the shared achievements of humanity, endowed and posited by its outstanding and creative thinkers. This is also known from the fact that the outcomes of creative thinking are often shared and experienced far beyond geographical locales and frontiers—more so perhaps in the age of globalization.

It is hoped that the great thinkers and leaders of humanity make it a part of their agenda and commitment to narrow down the distances and divides between the intellectual and cultural traditions of the world and aspire them to the veritable vision of a shared destiny and wider human fraternity in their deliberations.

Mohammad Hashim Kamali[36]

PREVIEW *BOOK YEAR 11*

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

The Lessons in *Book Year 1* through *Book Year 24*, including *Book Year 11* presented here, are numbered consecutively in order of the revelation of a Quranic Chapter. Here, in *Book Year 11*, we begin with Lesson 72, that is, Quran Chapter 14 which is the 72nd Chapter revealed followed by Quranic Chapters 21 and, finally, Lesson 75 with Quranic Chapter 32, the 75th Chapter revealed.

We are beginning to reach Arabic dates that have been recorded for important events in the life of the Prophet. The listing of the dates according to the Gregorian calendar are complicated and approximate only. That is why they are preceded by ca. For those who wish to know more about this topic, here is an excellent article by M. Hamidullah written in 1969 in the *Islamic Review and Arab Affairs*. Scroll down to the article.
http://www.aaiil.org/text/articles/islamicreview/1969/02feb/islamicreview_196902.pdf

The chronological order of the chapters of the Quran that follow throughout the series is based on the list accepted by al-Azhar University in Cairo[1] and is considered to be the official order. It differs greatly from the chronological order developed by Western scholars over the centuries and is much more detailed.

Quranic signs or verses (*ayat*) of each section (*ruku*) in a particular Quranic chapter are given in each lesson followed by a commentary and a Student Assessment consisting of an Example of the Eight Elements of Reasoning and questions or assignments in Developing Quranic Critical Thinking Skills.

We do not have a great deal of detailed information about the life of the Prophet Muhammad during the Makkah period. The information that we have falls in the various lessons, the Prelude, an Interlude or the Epilogue. Appendix 1 correlates the original Quranic chapters with their chronological order.

LESSON 72(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
DEVELOPING INSIGHT INTO EGO- AND SOCIO-CENTRICITY

In the Quranic perspective, ego-centricity as exemplified by the extremists (Salafists) as being selfish, self-centered, egocentric, thinking only of himself or herself without regard for the feelings or desires of others; having or regarding himself or herself as the center of all things. These are signs of ingratitude. It is to be irrational and unjust, having little or no regard for interests, beliefs, or attitudes other than one's own.

The ungrateful in Makkah at the time of the revelation, similar to the extremists (Salafists) today, cannot readily believe that they are acting out of self-interest. They continue to be unwilling to consider the point of view of others, believing that their view is 'the truth'. They refuse to accept the points of view of others when that would prevent them from getting what they thought that they want. They have to be right about everything. Being self-centered is the opposite of thinking critically.

Ego-centricity in terms of critical thinking is to confuse the immediate perception with reality. It manifests itself as an inability or unwillingness to consider others' points of view, to accept ideas or facts which would conflict with gratification of desire. In the extreme, it is characterized by a need to be right about everything, a lack of interest in consistency and clarity, an all or nothing attitude: I am 100% right; you are 100% wrong, and a lack of self-consciousness of one's own thought processes. The ego-centric individual is more concerned with the appearance of truth, fairness, and fair-mindedness, than with actually being correct, fair, or fair-minded. Egocentricity is the opposite of critical thought.

As people are socialized, ego-centricity partly evolves into socio-centricity. What is socio-centricity? It is the assumption by Salafi students that their own social group is inherently and self-evidently superior to all others. When a group or society sees itself as superior and so considers its views about the world as correct or as the only reasonable or justifiable views, and all its actions justified, there is a tendency to presuppose this superiority in all of its thinking and thus to think closed-mindedly. All dissent and doubt are considered disloyal, and rejected without consideration. Few people recognize the socio-centric nature of much of their thought. They develop a prejudice.

What is prejudice? A judgment, belief, opinion, point of view—favorable or unfavorable—formed before the facts are known, resistant to evidence and reason, or in disregard of facts which contradict it. Self-announced prejudice is rare. Prejudice almost always exists in obscured, rationalized, socially validated, functional forms. It enables people to sleep peacefully at night even while flagrantly abusing the rights of others. It enables people to get more of what they want, or to get it more easily. It is often sanctioned with a superabundance of pomp and self-righteousness. Unless students who are prone to

radicalization recognize these powerful tendencies toward selfish thought in the Salafi ideology, even in what appear to be lofty actions and moralistic rhetoric, they will not face squarely the problem of prejudice in human thought and action.

Uncritical and selfishly critical thought are often prejudiced. Most instruction in schools today, because students do not think their way to what they accept as true, tends to give students prejudices rather than knowledge. For example, partly as a result of schooling, people often accept as authorities those who incite irrational fear in them and unjust opinions. This prejudice toward pseudo-authority impedes rational assessment. Ego-centric identification extends to groups. The individual goes from: I am right! to: We are right! To put this another way, people find that they can often best satisfy their egocentric desires through a group.

Their belief in their own rightness is easier to maintain because they suppress the faults in their thinking. They automatically hide their ego-centricity from themselves. They fail to notice when their behavior contradicts their self-image. They base their reasoning on false assumptions they are unaware of making. They fail to make relevant distinctions of which they are otherwise aware, and able to make (when making such distinctions does not prevent them from getting what they want). They deny or conveniently 'forget' facts inconsistent with their conclusions. They often misunderstand or distort what others say.

The solution, then, is to learn how the Quran, their sacred text, teaches how to reflect on their reasoning and behavior; to make their assumptions explicit, to critique them, and, when they are false, stop making them; to apply the same concepts in the same ways to themselves and others; to consider every relevant fact, and to make their conclusions consistent with the evidence; and to listen carefully and openmindedly to those with whom they disagree. They can change egocentric tendencies when they see them for what they are: irrational and unjust. Therefore, the development of the awareness of students of their egocentric and sociocentric patterns of thought is a crucial part of education in Quranic critical thinking.

Students, and American Muslim students, in particular, should learn from the Quran how to reflect in order to solve any problem of self-centeredness or egocentricity that they may have. They should learn to reflect on their reasoning ability as well as on their behavior. This they do by clarifying their beliefs, critiquing them and when they realize that they may be false, they stop believing or behaving as they had been doing. They should reflect on all the relevant facts and make sure that their conclusions are consistent with the evidence they have before them. They need to listen carefully to others and be open-minded to other points of view.

Being self-centered carries over from an individual to one's society. Being sociocentric is to tend to regard one's own social group or family as superior

to others. When students study the early pre-Islamic community, they find that the Arabs in pre-Islamic times followed tribal law. Their slogan was: My tribe, right or wrong; my tribe is better than your tribe; my family is better than your family. This was how their individual self-centeredness transformed into socio-centricity. Thinkers, such as the pre-Quranic Arab, who were not critical thinkers, often confused their loyalty to their group by constant support even if their group was wrong. 'Group think' results when people egocentrically attach themselves to a group. One can see this in both children and adults: My daddy is better than your daddy! My school (religion, country, race, etc.) is better than yours.

If ego-centricity and socio-centricity are the disease, critical thinking that brings self-awareness is the cure. In cases in which their own egocentric commitments are not supported, few people accept another's egocentric reasoning. Most can identify the socio-centricity of members of opposing groups. Yet when we are thinking egocentrically or socio-centrically, it seems right to students (at least at the time).

Although everyone has egocentric, sociocentric, and critical (or fairminded) tendencies to some extent, the purpose of education in critical thinking is to help students move away from ego-centricity and socio-centricity toward increasingly critical thought. The sacred text helps students learn about their own sense of irrationality and injustice to the extent that it is present. Students should repeatedly discuss why people think irrationally and act unfairly.

The teacher can facilitate discussions of ego-centric or socio-centric thought and behavior whenever such discussions seem relevant. Such discussions can be used as a basis for having students think about their own egocentric or sociocentric tendencies. The class can discuss conditions under which people are most likely to be egocentric and how ego-centricity interferes with their ability to think and listen. By discussing what people think (and how they think) when they are being egocentric and sociocentric, students can begin to recognize common patterns of ego-centric thought. The class can discuss some of the common false assumptions they make at times. For example:

> Anyone who disapproves of anything I do is wrong or unfair.
> I have a right to have everything I want.
> Truth is what I want it to be. Different is bad.
> Our group (country, school, language, etc.) is better than any other.

QURANIC CHAPTER 14: ABRAHAM (IBRAHIM)

Makkah: *Alif Lam Ra.*
This is a Book We caused to descend to thee
so that you bring humanity out
from the shadows into the light

with the permission of their Lord to the path of
The Almighty, The Worthy of Praise. (14:1)
God! To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens
and whatever is in and on the earth,
and woe to the ones who are ungrateful.
For them is the severe punishment, (14:2)
those who embrace this present life
instead of the world to come
and bar from the way of God,
and desire in it crookedness.
Those are wandering far astray. (14:3)
We sent not any Messenger but with the tongue of his folk
in order that he make it manifest for them.
Then, God causes to go astray whom He wills
and guides whom He wills.
And He is The Almighty, The Wise. (14:4)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (14:5)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (14:6)

COMMENTARY°

This book which consists of words made up of letters like these is one which you certainly have not authored. It has been revealed to you for a definite purpose: *Alif Lam Ra. This is a Book We caused to descend to **you** so that **you** have brought humanity out from the shadows into the light with the permission of their Lord to the path of The Almighty, The Worthy of Praise.* (14:1) Your role is to take humanity out of the depths of darkness into which they have sunk, the darkness of superstition, conflicting systems and traditions; the darkness of believing in alleged deities, and false concepts, values and standards. You are to bring them, i.e. all of humanity, into the real light which removes all darkness. Not only does this light dispel all darkness from people's consciences and minds, it also affects their lives generally, setting for them new values and traditions.

His might is highlighted here as a threat to the ungrateful, while the fact that He is worthy of praise is mentioned as a reminder to those who express gratitude to Him.

Then follow some of God's attributes. He is notably mentioned as the One to whom everything in the heavens and on earth belong, who is in need of no one, and who controls the universe and all creatures therein: *God! To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in and on the earth.* (14:2) Whoever, then, comes out of darkness into light and follows guidance does well. The chapter does not mention anything about such a person here. Instead, it goes on

to warn the ungrateful against woeful suffering. This is inflicted on them as a result of their rejection of the greatest blessing God has bestowed on humanity, that is, sending them a Messenger whose task is to bring them out of darkness into light. That is an act of God's grace for which we cannot show enough gratitude. Yet some people reject it outright. *And woe to the ones who are ungrateful. For them is the severe punishment.* (14:2)

The chapter then mentions a quality that tells us the reason for their rejection of the blessing God bestows on humanity through His noble Messenger: *Those who embrace this present life instead of the world to come and bar from the way of God, and desire in it crookedness. Those are wandering far astray.* (14:3) Giving preference to the life of this world puts a person in a position of conflict with the requirements of faith, and on a collision course with the '*way of God*'. The situation is reversed when preference is given to the life to come. For then, this life is set on the right course. People enjoy it with moderation, always keen to earn God's pleasure. Hence there is no conflict between their preference for the life to come and their enjoyment of this life and the pleasures it offers.

The way of life advocated by faith protects human life against the selfishness and greed of those who are preoccupied with the life of this world in preference to the life to come. Under this way of life no one person or group can monopolize the earth's wealth and resources.

This is a blessing: *We sent not any Messenger but with the tongue of his folk in order that he make it manifest for them. Then, God causes to go astray whom He wills and guides whom He wills. And He is The Almighty, The Wise.* (14:4) God grants to people with every message He sends to them. For a Messenger to be able to bring people out of darkness into light, by their Lord's leave, he must be given his message in his own people's language. This is how he is then able to explain God's message to them. It is how the objectives of the message are fulfilled.

Although the Prophet Muhammad is a Messenger to all humanity, he is given his message in his own people's language, so that he can explain matters to them. They are the ones who would be the first to convey his message to the rest of humanity. His own life is, after all, limited. Therefore, he is commanded to call first on his own people so that the Arabian Peninsula becomes purely Muslim. It will then fulfil its role as the place from which the final divine message is carried to the rest of the world.

What God determined for him, which fits with the limited duration of human life, is that Muhammad delivered his message to his

own people in their own language. Then the task was completed by those who carried his message to other communities all over the world. Hence, there is no contradiction between his message being addressed to all humanity, and its being expressed in Arabic, the language of his own people. (14:4) A messenger's task is completed when he has made the truth clear to people. What comes out of it in the form of people following guidance or going astray is not in his power, and does not follow his desire. It is entirely up to God who has subjected human beings to a law of His own making, in keeping with His free-will. Whoever follows the way of error is left to go astray, and whoever follows the way of divine guidance reaches his destination. Both are subject to God's will.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

LEARN WHAT TERMS MEAN

Outline: An outline answer is organized description. You should give main points and essential supplementary materials, omitting minor details, and present the information in a systematic arrangement or classification.

Prove: A question which requires proof is one which demands confirmation or verification. In such discussions you should establish something with certainty by evaluating and citing experiential evidence or by logical reasoning.

Relate: In a question which asks you to show the relationship or to relate, your answer should emphasize connections and associations in descriptive form.

Review: A review specifies a critical examination. You should analyze and comment briefly in organized sequence upon the major points of the problem.

State: In questions which direct you to specify, give, state, or present, you are called upon to express the high points in brief, clear narrative form.

Summarize: When you are asked to summarize or present a summarization, you should give in condensed form the main points or facts. All details, illustrations and elaboration are to be omitted.

Trace: When a question asks you to trace a course of events, you are to give a description of progress, historical sequence, or development from the point of origin. Such narratives may call for probing or for deduction.

Say: Remember what you thought about ego-centric people before we studied them?
Which of our original beliefs were false or misleading?
Why did we think that way?
Where did we get these ideas?
How do people come to think they know what other people are like before they know anything about them?
What false beliefs might other people have about us? Why?

Questions to Generate Various Emotions•
Thoughts when feeling anger: This is dangerous. I may be harmed.
Thoughts when feeling indifference: This is not right, not fair.
Thoughts when feeling relief: This does not matter, no one can do anything about this.
Thoughts when feeling positive: Things are better now. This won't bother me anymore.

Questions to Evoke Personal or Social Change•
Why was she willing to do this? Was she scared?
What else did she feel that helped her ignore her fears?
Why? How did she look at things that helped her endure and stick with it?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to evaluate my ideas based on what I had learned in this lesson.

I was able to then describe why I had these ideas.

After study, you should evaluate your ideas in light of what you have learned, and why you had these ideas.

LESSON 72(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY EXPLORING THOUGHTS UNDERLYING FEELINGS AND FEELINGS UNDERLYING THOUGHTS

In order to better analyze ourselves, we need to separate our sense of reason from their emotions, our *nafs al-natiqah* from our *nafs al-ammarah* as if we had two opposing parts in our mind. Yet, they are closely connected. Our reason is based on some level of our emotions and our emotions are based on some level of our reasoning. To develop self-understanding, to come to know who we are, we need to understand the connection between the two.

Those who develop Quranic critical thinking come to realize that they are responding to a situation with their feelings (emotions) rather than with their reason (thought).They realize that their feelings would change if they understood the situation in a different way.

It has been found that uncritical thinkers are likely not to see any relationship between their feelings and their thoughts. This allows them to escape any responsibility for their feelings and thoughts and their resulting actions or behavior.

If we tend to base our decisions on our emotions, we need to understand them by asking ourselves the Quranic question: *Do they feel that they want other than the way of life of God* (din) *while to Him submitted whatever is in the heavens and the earth willingly or unwillingly and they are returned to Him?* (3:83)

QURANIC CHAPTER 14: ABRAHAM (IBRAHIM)
SIGNS 14:7-14:12

Makkah: *And mention when your Lord*
caused to be proclaimed:
If you gave thanks, I will increase your blessings.
And if you were ungrateful, truly,
My punishment will be severe. (14:7)

Makkah: Book 27: Moses (14:8)

Makkah: Book 25: Noah and his People; Hud and the People of Aad; Salih and the People of Thamud (14:9)

Their Messengers said: Is there any uncertainty about God,
One Who is the Originator of the heavens and the earth?
He calls you so that He would forgive you your impieties
and postpone for you a term, that which is determined.
They said: You are only mortal like us.
You want to bar us from what our fathers had been worshipping?
Then, bring us a clear authority. (14:10)
Their Messengers said to them: We are only mortals like you
except God shows His grace on whom He wills

of His servants.
And it had not been for us that we bring you an authority,
but by the permission of God.
And in God let the ones who believe put their trust.(14:11)
And why should we not put our trust in God while, surely,
He guided us to our ways? And we will endure patiently
however you maligned us.
And in God let the ones who trust, put their trust.(14:12)

COMMENTARY°

The section explains that taking humanity from darkness into light can only be accomplished 'by their Lord's leave'. Every Messenger makes the issues clear to his people, then: *We sent not any Messenger but with the tongue of his folk in order that he make it manifest for them. Then, God causes to go astray whom He wills and guides whom He wills. And He is The Almighty, The Wise.* (14:4)

These are the main lines defining the nature of a Messenger sent by God, and the mission assigned to him. Nothing of the nature of God's Messengers or their qualities can be confused with God's nature and attributes. Thus God's Oneness is shown in its full light, with no hint of similarity to anyone or anything.

The first of the two major issues that run through the whole chapter is the unity of the divine message preached by all God's Messengers. This is presented here in a unique way. Other chapters demonstrated this through the fact that every Messenger made the same address to his people. Every one of them would state the same truth, complete his work and pass away, to be followed by other messengers, each of whom stated the same truth in the same words, receiving the same reply. The ungrateful who deny the truth suffer whatever they may suffer in this life, although some of them are given respite, so as to face their fate on the Day of Judgment. In those chapters every Messenger was shown in a separate scene, like we see a film playing back different events.

In this chapter, all the Prophets are grouped together on one side and their erring communities on the other. The battle goes on between them in this life, but does not come to an end here. On the contrary, we follow its progress until the Day of Judgment.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experi-

ences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

HELPFUL HINTS ABOUT QUESTIONING YOUR FEELINGS

Raise basic issues to yourself.
Explore beneath the surface of things.
Follow-up problematic areas of feelings.
Discover the structure of your own thoughts and feelings.
Develop sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
Arrive at judgment through your own reasoning.
Note claims, evidence, conclusions, questions-at-issue, assumptions, implications, consequences, concepts, interpretations, and the Quranic point of view

QUESTIONS

Whenever you discuss someone's feelings in a classroom setting, you can consider what the person might be thinking to have that feeling in that situation:

Why does the "one who turns away" feel this way?
How is he interpreting his situation?
What led him to that conclusion?
Would you have felt the same if you had been in his circumstances?
Why or why not?
What accounts for the difference?
What could he have thought instead?
Then how might he have felt?

This strategy can be used in the service of developing a sense of justice and courage by exploring your thoughts that underlie your feelings. You can discuss the thoughts underlying passionate commitment to personal or social change.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to do all of the following and, as a result, am beginning to understand my feelings about certain issues.
Raise basic issues to myself.
Explore beneath the surface of things.
Develop sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
Arrive at judgment through your own reasoning.

LESSON 72(3). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
DEVELOPING INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY

The development of an attitude of intellectual curiosity is of prime importance in learning how to become a Quranic critical thinker. Quranic thinkers need to be curious about their environment.

Critical thinkers need to seek explanations of apparent discrepancies. They need to speculate as to possible causes of these discrepancies. In short, they need to be predisposed to wonder about the world around them. This sense of wonder, this intellectual curiosity that seeks explanations and offers solutions, is something that can be and needs to be encouraged and developed.

QURANIC CHAPTER 14: ABRAHAM (IBRAHIM)
SIGNS 14:13-14:21

Makkah: *And those who were ungrateful*
said to their Messengers:
Certainly, we will drive you out of our region
unless you revert to our creed.
So their Lord revealed to them:
Truly, We will cause to perish the ones who are unjust. (14:13)
Certainly, We will cause you to dwell in the region after them.
This is for whoever feared My station
and feared My threat. (14:14)
And the Messengers sought judgment
and frustrated was every haughty, stubborn one. (14:15)
And hell is ahead of him.
He will be given to drink of watery pus. (14:16)
He will gulp it and he will be about to swallow it easily
when death will approach him from every place,
yet he will not be dead.
And ahead of him will be a harsh punishment. (14:17)
A parable of those who were ungrateful to their Lord,
their actions are as ashes over which
the wind blew strongly on a tempestuous day.
They will have no power over anything they earned.
That is the wandering far away, astray. (14:18)
*Have **you** not considered that God*
created the heavens and the earth in Truth?
If He wills, He will cause you to be put away
and bring a new creation. (14:19)
And that is not a great matter for God. (14:20)
And they will depart to God altogether.
Then, the weak would say to those who grew arrogant:

Truly, we had been followers of yours.
Have you ones who avail us at all against the punishment of God?
They would say: If God would have guided us,
we would have guided you.
It is equal to us whether we were patientless
or endured patiently.
There is no asylum for us. (14:21)

COMMENTARY°

At this point tyranny reveals its intentions. It does not argue, think or take a rational approach. It feels that it has no power to face up to faith, and that it will inevitably be defeated. Hence, it threatens the use of brute force, which is the only means to which tyranny can resort: *And those who were ungrateful said to their Messengers: Certainly, we will drive you out of our region unless you revert to our creed. So their Lord revealed to them: Truly, We will cause to perish the ones who are unjust.* (14:13)

This shows clearly the nature of the battle between the Quranic message and ignorance, or tribal honor. The latter does not agree that the Quranic message should have its own entity, which is independent from it. It will not tolerate a separate existence for the Quranic message, and will not live in peace with the Quranic message, even if the Quranic message wants peace with it. That is because the Quranic message wants to be represented in a social set up with its own leadership and because it claims allegiance from its followers. But tribal honor cannot tolerate this. Therefore, the demand the ungrateful make of their Messengers is not merely to stop calling on people to believe. They further demand that they return to their own ways and be fully integrated in their own society. They must not have their separate entity. But divine faith will not accept this as it is contrary to its nature. Hence, the Messengers reject this demand. It is not for a person who submits to God to go back on that and return to tribal honor.

When brute force reveals its shameless face, there is no room for argument or a peaceful call to accept the faith. But God will not abandon His Messengers to face tribal honor on their own.

By its very nature, a society based on tribal honor does not allow anyone who submits to God to work from within its boundaries, unless the work of that believer and his efforts and potentials will support that society and contribute to its power. Those who imagine themselves able to serve their faith by penetrating un-Quranic society and working within its system do not actually understand the nature

of the organic structure of that society. It is a society that forces everyone to work for its beliefs and concepts. Hence, the noble messengers' refusal to revert to their people's old ways, after they had been saved from them by God.

At this point the Supreme Power levels its blow to which no resistance can be made by weak human beings, even though they may be ruthless despots: (14:14)

We must realize here that the Supreme Power does not intervene to settle the issue between the Messengers and their communities until the Messengers themselves declare their final split with their people.

Here: *And those who were ungrateful said to their Messengers: Certainly, we will drive you out of our region unless you revert to our creed. So their Lord revealed to them: Truly, We will cause to perish the ones who are unjust.* (14:13) we have an emphatic statement. Furthermore, it adds power through its use of inversion and the plural pronoun in reference to God. It asserts a promise to destroy the tyrants who threaten the believers and, by their threats, do wrong to themselves, the truth, God's Messengers and all people. *Certainly, We will cause you to dwell in the region after them. This is for whoever feared My station and feared My threat.* (14:14) This is not an act of favoritism, but the work of a fair law of nature that God has set in operation. This settlement in the land after the tyrants have gone is promised to those who fear God and do not act with arrogance or overbearing pride.

Such people fear what God has warned them against, so they take measures to avoid it. They do not engage in corruption or wrongdoing against other people. Hence they deserve to be given their chance and be established on earth.

This sets the scene for a confrontation between the feeble power of wrongdoing despots and the great power of God, the Supreme Being who controls the whole universe. The messengers' task has been completed with the clear delivery of the message and the declaration of a split between themselves and the ungrateful. The tyrants marshal all their feeble power and stand to one side, and the messengers, who in all humility call people to faith, stand opposite, but they are supported by God, the Almighty. Both parties pray for victory, and the result is as expected: *And the Messengers sought judgment and frustrated was every haughty, stubborn one. And hell is ahead of him. He will be given to drink of watery pus. He will gulp it and he will be about to swallow it easily when death will approach him from every place, yet he will not be dead. And ahead of him will be a harsh punishment.* (14:15-14:17)

The image of ashes being blown about on a stormy day: *A parable of those who were ungrateful to their Lord, their actions are as ashes over which the wind blew strongly on a tempestuous day.* (14:18) adds action to the concept that the ungrateful' works will come to nothing. People cannot hold on to any part of their actions, or make use of them. This image gives a far more profound effect than any expression of the same meaning of total loss in intellectual terms.

The following verses then speak of the fate of the ungrateful of olden times in order to demonstrate the fate of the unbelieving Arabs of the Quraysh. These verses threaten them with God's ability to replace them with a new creation: *Have you not considered that God created the heavens and the earth in Truth? If He wills, He will cause you to be put away and bring a new creation. And that is not a great matter for God.* (14:19-14:20)

This switch from a discussion about faith and disbelief, and the dispute between God's Messengers and the ungrateful in un-Quranic societies, to a picture of the heavens and the earth is very natural in the Quran. It is also natural in human feelings and perceptions. This is a further indication of the divine source of the Quran. There is a secret but intelligible discourse between us and the universe. Human nature responds instinctively to this secret communication once it tunes in to it and receives its signals.

In light of the fate suffered by despots who stubbornly took the wrong side in the battle between truth and falsehood, a strong warning is issued: *If He wills, He will cause you to be put away and bring a new creation.* (14:19) He who is able to create the heavens and the earth can easily replace the human race with a different one, or bring about a new community of humans in place of the present one. Again the connotations of taking a community away to replace it with another fits properly with the image of ashes blown far away.

The creation of the heavens and the earth testify that it is indeed easy for God. *And that is not a great matter for God.* (14:20) The fate of earlier unbelieving communities also testifies to it, and so do the ashes scattered hither and thither. It is indeed a remarkable feature of the Quranic style that imagery and connotations slot together in perfect harmony.

At this point in the chapter we note an even higher level of the inimitable style of the Quran, and its power of imagery, expression and harmony between scenes and ideas. A short while ago we saw obstinate tyrants coming to grief, with an image of hell looming large behind them as they are made to suffer their greatest disappointment in this life. Now we see them on the Day of Judgment. It is at once

an extraordinary and powerful scene, full of movement, reaction and dialogue between the weak and the powerful, and between both and Satan.

The weak are those who forfeited the most essential quality of the human being honored by God when they forfeited their rights to freedom of thought, belief and choice, making themselves no more than the servants of arrogant despots: *And they will depart to God altogether. Then, the weak would say to those who grew arrogant: Truly, we had been followers of yours. Have you ones who avail us at all against the punishment of God?* (14:21) They submitted themselves like servants to such despots like themselves in preference to submission to God alone. Such weakness is no excuse; indeed it is their crime.

God does not like that anyone should feel weak. Indeed he calls on all people to seek His protection, and find strength in His support. He does not like that anyone should abandon, willingly or unwillingly, his or her share of freedom, which is a privilege for which they deserve honor. No material force, great as it may be, can force into submission a human being who wants to remain free and hold on to his human dignity. The maximum that brute force can achieve is to have power over the body, imprisoning and tormenting it. As for the mind, conscience and spirit, these cannot be imprisoned by anyone unless the victim so agrees to hand them over.

Here we see those weak and humble 'followers' as they come on the stage of the hereafter. Addressing arrogant tyrants, they say: *And they will depart to God altogether. Then, the weak would say to those who grew arrogant: Truly, we had been followers of yours. Have you ones who avail us at all against the punishment of God?* (14:21) We have followed you and, as a result, we are now facing this painful destiny. Or maybe it is that after seeing the punishment that awaits them they try to reproach the tyrants for having led them to this end. The chapter quotes what they say, which carries overtones of humility.

The arrogant tyrants reply to their question, saying: *They would say: If God would have guided us, we would have guided you. It is equal to us whether we were patientless or endured patiently.* (14:21) Why should you blame us when we are facing the same destiny as you? We have not followed guidance ourselves and left you to go astray. Had God given us guidance we would have led you to it, just as we led you to error when we went astray. They attribute both their guidance and error to God, now acknowledging His great power, when once they had denied these. They exercised their tyranny, subjugating the weak to their power, in a manner which took no account

of God's power. They now try to absolve themselves by attributing their error and role in leading other people astray to God. But God does not command anyone to go astray.

They go on to implicitly reproach the weak, telling them that there is no use in panic or patient endurance. God's punishment is due and it cannot be averted. The time has passed when panic could have helped those who went astray to return to God in repentance. Similarly, patience in adversity used to be of benefit, because God would bestow His mercy on those who were patient. But now this is all over. *There is no asylum for us.* (14:21)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QUESTIONS

The following questions may help you in understanding intellectual curiosity.

What is it to look at things Quranically?
You seem to be approaching this issue from x perspective.
Why have you chosen this rather than that perspective?
How would other groups/types of people respond? Why?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I sometimes waste time. That is, I sometimes fail to use all of my time productively or even pleasurably.
Sometimes I jump from one diversion to another, without enjoying any of them.
Sometimes I become irritated about matters beyond my control.
Sometimes I fail to plan well causing me negative consequences.
Sometimes I worry unproductively.
Sometimes I spend time regretting what is past.
Sometimes I just stare off blankly into space.

LESSON 72(4). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY GENERATING PURPOSE, AIM, GOAL, OBJECTIVE

One of the goals of the Quran is to encourage the oneness of humanity. Others are: to break the bonds of ignorance, missed guidance, social and moral corruption. These are all considered to be shadows or darknesses. When these bonds are broken, the Quran guides humanity to goodness, light and being fair and just.

You begin developing your reasoning or discernment faculty by understanding what this particular element of thought or reasoning is. That is, you learn to generate the purpose, aim, goal or objective of the Quranic signs and their message.

QURANIC CHAPTER 14: ABRAHAM (IBRAHIM) SIGNS 14:22-14:27

Makkah: *Satan would say*
when the command would be decided:
Truly, God promised you a promise of the Truth.
And I promised you, but I broke it.
And I had been no authority over you,
but that I called to you and you responded to me.
So blame me not, but blame yourselves.
I am not one who assists you nor are you one who assists me.
Truly, I was ungrateful for your ascribing me
as partner with God before.
Truly, the ones who are unjust,
for them is a painful punishment. (14:22)
And will be caused to enter those who believed
and did as the ones in accord with morality
into Gardens beneath which rivers run.
They, ones who will dwell in them forever
with the permission of their Lord.
And their greeting in it will be: Peace! (14:23)
Have you not considered how God propounded a parable?
What is like a good word is what is like a good tree.
Its root is one that is firm and its branches are in heaven. (14:24)
It gives all its produce for awhile with the permission of its Lord.
And God propounds parables for humanity
so that perhaps they will recollect. (14:25)
And the parable of a bad word is that of a bad tree,
that was uprooted from above the earth,
so it has no stability. (14:26)
God makes firm those who believed with the saying,

one that is firm in this present life and in the world to come.
And God will cause to go astray the ones who are unjust.
And God accomplishes what He wills. (14:27)

COMMENTARY°

We have now moved from this world's stage to that of the next where everyone appears before God: *And will be caused to enter those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality into Gardens beneath which rivers run.* (14:23) They all come forward: the arrogant tyrants who reject His message and their weak subordinates, joined by Satan, and also those who believed in the Messengers and did God-conscious deeds. In fact they have always been exposed before God, but now they know and feel that there is no screen to give them cover or protection. They all appear in front of Him, and now the dialogue starts:

Matters have been settled and there can be no room for discussion or argument. Everyone has been shown their place in the life to come. But at this point we see a remarkable portrait: it is Satan, the one who did everything in his power to divert people away from the truth and turn them towards error and falsehood, who reproaches both the weak and the tyrants. His words may sound to them worse than the torture they will soon face: *Satan would say when the command would be decided: Truly, God promised you a promise of the Truth. And I promised you, but I broke it. And I had been no authority over you, but that I called to you and you responded to me. So blame me not, but blame yourselves. I am not one who assists you nor are you one who assists me. Truly, I was ungrateful for your ascribing me as partner with God before. Truly, the ones who are unjust, for them is a painful punishment.* (14:22)

What an amazing scene. Satan is truly devilish! His personality appears here in its most striking colors, just as we have seen the true character of the weak and the powerful. Satan who was the constant whisperer, presenting every type of temptation, turning people away from the voice of truth is now stabbing his followers in the back. Now that matters have been settled, they cannot make any counter attack. They cannot even reply to him. It is he who says now, after the issues have been decided: (14:22) He goes on to rub it in, reproaching them for responding to him when he had no power over them. It is they who gave themselves up to him, forgetting all the old enmity between themselves and Satan. They embraced his falsehood and abandoned the message of truth God had sent them.

He not only rebukes them, but calls on them to rebuke them-

selves for having obeyed him: *So blame me not, but blame yourselves. I am not one who assists you nor are you one who assists me.* (14:22) He then adds insult to injury, lets them down unashamedly, and declares that he wants nothing further to do with them. Yet it was he who had previously given them all sorts of rosy promises. He went on to tell them that no one could ever defeat them. Now he will not even try to give them any support should they appeal to him for it, nor will they help him when he cries out: *Truly, I was ungrateful for your ascribing me as partner with God before.* (14:22) There is no contact or relationship between us now. He then absolves himself of their associating him as a partner with God. *Truly, I was ungrateful for your ascribing me as partner with God before.* (14:22) He then finishes this Satanic speech with a devastating blow directed at those who followed him in every way: *Truly, the ones who are unjust, for them is a painful punishment.* (14:22)

This is what they receive from Satan, after they have followed him blindly into error. This is what they get from him for having abandoned God's Messengers who called on them to follow God's guidance.

Before the curtains are drawn, we see on the other side the believers who have won the battle against Satan, and who are now enjoying their success: *And will be caused to enter those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality into Gardens beneath which rivers run. They, ones who will dwell in them forever with the permission of their Lord. And their greeting in it will be: Peace!* (14:23) Thus the scene ends. This is the outcome of the whole story between the message and its advocates on the one side and powerful tyrants who deny God and His Messengers on the other.

The section provides several elements that contribute to the concept of stability associated with the good, firm tree. It is painted here as having firm roots, well entrenched in the earth, its branches stretching wide on the horizon, giving the clear impression of solidity, strength and firmness. As this great tree is compared to a good word, we are told that God will strengthen the believers through the true, unshakeable word in both this life and the life to come. *God makes firm those who believed with the saying, one that is firm in this present life and in the world to come. And God will cause to go astray the ones who are unjust.* (14:27) And just like the bad tree that is uprooted from the face of the earth, lacking stable existence, the wrongdoers God lets go astray. *And God accomplishes what He wills.*(14:27) Thus the modes of expression fit harmoniously with the connotations stressed in the chapter.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

LEARNING TO THINK QURANICALLY

Accuracy (to be free from error)

The purpose or goal needs to be understood when students concern themselves with accuracy and truth. They should ask themselves:

What evidence do I have to support this purpose?
How it can be explained to help others understand,?
Can objections be raised from other points of view?
Are there any limitations to our point if view?

QUESTIONS

Are the Quranic words clear? Do we have to analyze any concepts?
Do we know when the key Quranic words and phrases apply and don't apply?
Do we clearly understand how they apply to this sign?
Does this question ask something about facts?
About the meanings of words?
Are we evaluating anything?
What? Why? What criteria should we use in the evaluation?
What facts are relevant?
How can we get the evidence we need?
How would the facts be gathered?
What would researchers have to do to conduct such a study?
What problems would they face?
How could those obstacles be surmounted?

How would your rate yourself? Answer the following:s

Am I clear about what precisely I am evaluating?;
Am I clear about my purpose? Is my purpose legitimate?
Given my purpose, what are the relevant criteria or standards for evaluation?
Do I have sufficient information about that which I am evaluating?
Is that information relevant to the purpose?

LESSON 72(5). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY CLARIFYING ISSUES OR CONCLUSIONS

When there is a clear question stated about an issue in a Quranic sign, it is important for Quranic critical thinkers to first recognize what is needed to answer, settle or solve it and then evaluate solutions or conclusions. In other words, before you can agree with or disagree with a statement, you must clearly understand it. Quranic critical thinkers first understand the sign(s) and then make a discerning judgment. They then are able to ask the appropriate questions that would lead to understanding and evaluating the situation.

QURANIC CHAPTER 14: ABRAHAM (IBRAHIM) SIGNS 14:28-14:34

Madinah (14:28)
Madinah (14:29)
Makkah: *And they made rivals*
with God, causing others
to go astray from His way.
Say: Take joy, but, truly, your homecoming is the fire! (14:30)
Say to My servants who believed
that they should perform the formal prayer
and spend from what We provided them secretly
and in public before a Day approaches in which
there is neither trading nor befriending. (14:31)
God is He Who created the heavens and the earth
and caused water to descend from heaven
and brought out thereby fruits as provision for you.
And He caused boats to be subservient to you
that they run through the sea by His command.
And He caused rivers to be subservient to you. (14:32)
And He caused the sun to be subservient to you and the moon,
both, ones that are constant in their work.
And He caused the nighttime
to be subservient to you and the daytime. (14:33)
And He gave you all that you asked of Him.
And if you were to number the divine blessing of God,
you would not count them,
truly, the human being is wrongdoing and an ingrate. (14:34)

COMMENTARY°

The chapter invites the Prophet, and every believer, to marvel at the curious behavior of such people, particularly since they have seen what happened to earlier communities. All this has been por-

trayed for their benefit in this chapter in a most vivid way, accounting for what took place between the ungrateful and the Messengers sent to them. It was all shown to them as if it were taking place before their very eyes. In fact, the Quran only portrays what is going to take place in the hereafter as if it is happening now, or just happened before our very eyes.

These people have exchanged God's blessing of a Messenger sent to them with disbelief. The Messenger called on them to believe in God alone and to associate no partners with Him, but they abandoned all this: *And they made rivals with God, causing others to go astray from His way. Say: Take joy, but, truly, your homecoming is the fire!* (14:30) They place their false deities in a position equal to that of God, and offer worship to them as they would offer it to Him. They submit to these false deities as they would submit to Him, and they attribute to them some of the attributes that belong only to God. They thus lead people astray from the only straight path leading to God, the only deity in the universe.

The Prophet is instructed to say to such people that they may enjoy themselves in this life as they please, but that this enjoyment will last only for the limit God has determined. The eventual outcome is well known: *And they made rivals with God, causing others to go astray from His way. Say: Take joy, but, truly, your homecoming is the fire!* (14:30)

The Prophet is further instructed to leave these people alone, not to trouble himself with them any more. Instead he should address God's servants who have accepted the faith. These are the people who will take heed when they are warned against evil. They accept God's blessings and appreciate them, and will never exchange them for disbelief. The Prophet is to address these people and teach them how to be grateful for God's blessings. They should express their gratitude through worship, obedience to God and kindness to His servants: *Say to My servants who believed that they should perform the formal prayer and spend from what We provided them secretly and in public before a Day approaches in which there is neither trading nor befriending.* (14:31)

The believers are told to spend on others now so that their balance which is preserved for them increases through gains they make by charitable spending. This they have to do before a day comes when there is no longer any possibility for wealth to grow, or friendship to bring any benefit. What is of benefit to people is only the good works they have already done, for their reward is stored: *Say to My servants who believed that they should perform the formal prayer and spend from what We provided them secretly and in public*

before a Day approaches in which there is neither trading nor befriending. (14:31)

At this point, the chapter opens the book of the universe where every page speaks of God's countless blessings. These extend beyond the furthest point our senses can reach, and go into the skies, the earth, the sun, the moon, the day and night, the water pouring down from the skies and the fruits of all plants on earth, the oceans and seas where ships and boats sail, and the rivers flowing with the different means of producing what sustains life. All these universal images are available for all to see, but people do not look, reflect or express gratitude. Man is truly unjust, ingrate, exchanging God's blessings for unbelief, and setting up deities which he claims to be equal to God, when it is God who creates, sustains and controls the universe and all creatures therein: *God is He Who created the heavens and the earth and caused water to descend from heaven and brought out thereby fruits as provision for you. And He caused boats to be subservient to you that they run through the sea by His command. And He caused rivers to be subservient to you. And He caused the sun to be subservient to you and the moon, both, ones that are constant in their work. And He caused the nighttime to be subservient to you and the daytime. And He gave you all that you asked of Him. And if you were to number the divine blessing of God, you would not count them, truly, the human being is wrongdoing and an ingrate.* (14:32-14:34)

The great scene of God's blessings that is presented here is painted with fascinating skill, drawing its lines in the same directions the different blessings take in relation to man. This is noticeable in the line of the heavens and the earth, followed by that of water pouring down from the skies and plants and fruits shooting up from the earth. We then have a line depicting the oceans with ships sailing on their surface and rivers flowing with much bounty. A new line takes us back to the skies to show us the sun and the moon, coupled with the line of the night and day, which is closely connected to the sun and moon but remains firm on earth. The final line is comprehensive, throwing its color and shade over the whole panoramic scene: *And if you were to number the divine blessing of God, you would not count them, truly, the human being is wrongdoing and an ingrate.* (14:34) Here we see a harmony that incorporates every touch, line, color and shade in a universal scene of God's blessings.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based

on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QUESTIONS

The following questions may help you in understanding purpose, aim, goal, objective.

Is the purpose of these signs clear?
What would someone who disagreed with this do?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I thoroughly understand the requirements of the Quranic Studies class, how it is taught and what is expected of me.
I was able to ask questions about the grading policies and for advice on how best to prepare for class?
I feel I was an active learner?
I was able to work ideas into my thinking by active reading, writing, speaking, and listening?

QURANIC CHAPTER 14: ABRAHAM (IBRAHIM)

SIGNS 14:35-14:41

Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (14:35)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (14:26)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (14:37)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (14:38)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (14:39)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (14:40)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (14:41)

LESSON 72(6). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY CLARIFYING AND ANALYZING THE MEANINGS OR WORDS OR PHRASES

Critical thinkers of Quranic studies have clear thoughts about the Quranic signs. They perceive the concepts and recognize what kind of evidence is needed to analyze the meaning of Quranic words. They know that just giving a definition is not sufficient. They must also be able to give examples of the Quranic concept. On the other hand, uncritical thinkers see words drifting through their minds. They are not able to give examples of the concepts of the words or to critique their use of the concept.

God reveals the truth in the Quran in a variety of ways, some explicit and others by allusion, the latter mainly through the modality of the signs, in order to provoke and engage the human intellect. The signs of God cannot be read just from the face of the signs, but require thinking and reflection. This is indicated in the phrase: *We shall cause them to see Our signs* ... which suggests that the signs may not be instantaneously visible to the naked eye. The whole concept of the signs seeks to forge a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We have sent forth to you ... so that you may meditate on its signs, and those imbued with intuition may recollect.* (38: 29) A sign is also a portent and allusion to something other than itself and should not therefore be seen as the final message and purpose of the revelation containing it.

GUIDE: When giving examples and discussing them, you should begin with the clearest and most obvious cases and their opposite. Once your class has discussed them at length can more controversial or difficult concepts be discussed.

QURANIC CHAPTER 14: ABRAHAM (IBRAHIM) SIGNS 14:42-14:52

Makkah: *And assume not that God*
is One Who is Heedless of what
the ones who are unjust do.
He only postpones their reckoning to a Day
when their sight will be fixed in horror, (14:42)
ones who run forward with eyes fixed in horror,
ones who lift up their heads.
Their glance goes not back to them.
And their minds are void. (14:43)
And warn humanity of a Day
the punishment will approach them.
So those who did wrong will say:
Our Lord! Postpone for us a near term

so that we answer Thy call and follow the Messengers.
Yet swore you not an oath before that
there would be no ceasing for you? (14:44)
And you inhabited the dwellings
of those who did wrong to themselves.
And it became clear to you how
We accomplished against them
and We propounded for you parables. (14:45)
And, surely, they planned their plan and their plan was with God,
even if their plan had been to displace mountains. (14:46)
So assume not that God will be one
who breaks His promise to His Messengers.
Truly, God is Almighty, Possessor of Requital. (14:47)
On a Day when the earth will be substituted
for other than this earth and the heavens,
they will depart to God, The One, The Omniscient God, (14:48)
and you will consider the ones who sin that Day,
ones who are chained in bonds, (14:49)
their tunics are made of pitch
and the fire will overcome their faces (14:50)
so that God would give recompense
to every soul for what it earned.
Truly, God is Swift in reckoning. (14:51)
This is the delivering of the message to humanity
so that they be warned by it
and that they know that He is One God
so that those imbued with intuition recollect. (14:52)

COMMENTARY°

Here the chapter completes the picture, showing what God has prepared for those ungrateful who deny God's blessings, and tells when they will face their inevitable destiny. This comes in quick images of the Day of Judgement which fill our hearts with fear: (14:42-14:43)

It is to this day that God delays the wrongdoers' punishment. Now they stand in their position, overwhelmed by fear. In this scene they are like a small bird caught in the claws of a predator: *And assume not that God is One Who is Heedless of what the ones who are unjust do. He only postpones their reckoning to a Day when their sight will be fixed in horror, ones who run forward with eyes fixed in horror, ones who lift up their heads. Their glance goes not back to them. And their minds are void* .(14:42-43)

Warn them against the day when the suffering drawn earlier is bound to befall them. At this point, the wrongdoers turn to their Lord with an urgent appeal, saying: *Our Lord! Postpone for us a near term so that we answer Your call and follow the Messengers.* (14:44)

At this point the flow of the discourse is changed from the narrative form to that of an address, as though they are now at that point, staring fixedly in horror, making their passionate appeal. This whole world is rolled over and we seem to be already in the hereafter, and they are being reproached from on high, reminded of the wrongs they used to do in their first life: *Yet swore you not an oath before that there would be no ceasing for you?* (14:44) How do you see yourselves now? Have you suffered any decline? You asserted this when you had in front of your eyes the ruins of those who went before you, giving proof of what happened to them and their inevitable destiny .

It is amazing that you should see the dwellings of former wrongdoers, testifying to what happened to them, and you dwelling in their place, and yet you swear that you would not suffer a decline. With this hard reproach the scene is completed. *And you inhabited the dwellings of those who did wrong to themselves. And it became clear to you how We accomplished against them and We propounded for you parables.* (14:45) We understand what happens to them, and what takes place after their appeal and their disappointment.

The chapter then turns to their present situation, and their wicked scheming against God's Messenger, and their evil devices in every aspect of life. It gives the clear impression that they will face their inevitable destiny, no matter what powerful and elaborate schemes they devise: *And, surely, they planned their plan and their plan was with God, even if their plan had been to displace mountains.* (14:46)

God is certainly aware of their scheming, although it may be so strong and powerful that it causes mountains, the strongest and most solid and firm creation, to move. In fact, the last thing any human being would expect to move is a mountain. However, their scheming is in no way hidden from God, and never immune from God's power. It is in front of Him, and He can foil it and do with it what He likes.

The Prophet is told again: *So assume not that God will be one who breaks His promise to His Messengers.*(14:47) What the ungrateful devise is of no consequence. It cannot obstruct the fulfilment of God's promise to His Messengers to grant them victory and to inflict a mighty punishment on the ungrateful: *Truly, God is Almighty, Possessor of Requital.* (14:47) He does not let injustice escape punishment. Those who resort to scheming and devising foul plans will not be spared. The word "avenge" is especially suitable here as it gives the meaning that counters both injustice and wicked scheming.

A perpetrator of such injustice and wickedness deserves to suffer God's vengeance, which is, from God's point of view, the exercise of divine justice.

This is certainly inevitable: *On a Day when the earth will be substituted for other than this earth and the heavens, they will depart to God, The One, The Omniscient God.* (14:48) We do not know how this happens, nor are we aware of the nature of the new earth or the new heavens, or their respective positions. The statement only gives us an impression of God's might and His ability to change the earth and heavens. By contrast, the schemes the ungrateful devise are all too weak.

Suddenly, we see this as though it has happened:. They realize that they are exposed, without cover or screen to protect them. They are neither in their homes nor in their graves. They stand in the open, in front of the Almighty. The emphasis here is on God's power which cannot be resisted, not even by the scheming of the mighty tyrants which can almost make mountains move.

Then we are shown a scene of the humiliating suffering which stands in contrast to their scheming and tyranny: *And **you** will consider the ones who sin that Day, ones who are chained in bonds, their tunics are made of pitch and the fire will overcome their faces* (14:49-14:50) The evil-doers are thus chained, each two together, and they are made to pass in ranks. Their humiliation is again indicative of God's might. In addition to their being chained together, they wear dirty, black pitch garments that can easily catch fire. The connotations here are humiliation and combustion as they draw near to the fire. *So that God would give recompense to every soul for what it earned. Truly, God is Swift in reckoning.* (14:51) All they have earned is their scheming and injustice. Its reward is that they stand powerless, humiliated. The swiftness of God's reckoning contrasts with the scheming they thought would protect them, and ensure them victory. Hence, they are dealt with swiftly to add to their humiliation.

The chapter then ends with something similar to its opening, but it comes in the form of an open and loud declaration, intended to inform all humanity: *This is the delivering of the message to humanity so that they be warned by it and that they know that He is One God so that those imbued with intuition recollect.* (14:52) The essential purpose of this message and the warning it contains is that people should know that "He is the One and Only God." This is the basic concept of this religion on which its code of living is built.

What is required here is not that people should merely acquire such information. The purpose is that they should conduct their lives on the basis of this knowledge. It is that people should submit to God

alone, since *they know that He is One God.* (14:52) It is who deserves to be the Lord, i.e. the Sovereign, the Ruler and the Legislator.

As stated earlier, polytheism does not only take the form of believing in multiple deities and claiming that they are God's partners. It is instead the acknowledgement of other lords alongside Him. Idol worship is represented in adopting banners and slogans which are given the same sort of authority as belonged to idols of old. People everywhere then must examine their lives to determine whom they actually submit to. If they submit totally to God, obeying His orders and laws to the exclusion of any other, then they follow the divine faith. If not, then they have a religion based on idol worship. This is a terrible situation indeed. *This is the delivering of the message to humanity so that they be warned by it and that they know that He is One God so that those imbued with intuition recollect.* (14:52).

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

EXAMINE IN DEPTH

The sacred text should be examined in depth.

Why does the sacred text tell you about the importance of knowledge?
Why does the Quranic message think this (concept, skill, procedure, step) is worth knowing?
Why does the sacred text tell you to do this?
What would happen if you didn't?

8 STAGES OF WRITING

1. Diagram: For a question which specifies a diagram you should present a drawing, chart, plan, or graphic representation in your answer. Generally you are expected to label the diagram and in some cases add a brief explanation or description.

2. Discuss: The term discuss, which appears often in essay questions, directs you to examine, analyze carefully, and present considerations pro and con regarding the problems or items involved. This type of question calls for a complete and entailed answer.

3. Enumerate: The word enumerate specifies a list or outline form of reply. In such questions you should recount, one by one, in concise form, the points required.

4. Evaluate: In an evaluation question you are expected to present a careful appraisal of the problem stressing both advantages and limitations. Evaluation implies authoritative and, to a lesser degree, personal appraisal of both contributions and limitations.

5. Explain: In explanatory answers it is imperative that you clarify and interpret the material you present. In such an answer it is best to state the how or why, reconcile any differences in opinion or experimental results, and, where possible, state causes. The aim is to make plain the conditions which give rise to whatever you are examining.

6. Illustrate: A question which asks you to illustrate usually requires you to explain or clarify your answer to the problem by presenting a figure, picture, diagram, or concrete example.

7. Interpret: An interpretation question is similar to one requiring explanation. You are expected to translate, exemplify, solve, or comment upon the subject and usually to give your judgment or reaction to the problem.

8. Justify: When you are instructed to justify your answer, you must prove or show grounds for decisions. In such an answer, evidence should be presented in convincing form.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I studied the signs as a way to begin to think Quranically. (Since you are in a Quranic Studies class, your goal should be to think Quranically.)

I was able to ask questions.

I engaged myself in lectures and discussions by asking questions.

By asking questions, I realized that I discovered what I did and did not know.

LESSON 73(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY READING CRITICALLY: CLARIFYING OR DISCERNING THE SACRED TEXT

Critical thinkers read with a healthy skepticism. But they do not doubt or deny until they understand. They clarify before they judge. They expect intelligibility from what they read. Critical readers ask themselves questions as they read, wonder about the implications of, reasons for, examples of, and meaning of the sacred text. They do not approach written material as a collection of sentences, but as a whole, trying out various interpretations until one fits all of the sign or signs, rather than ignoring or distorting statements that don't fit their interpretation.

> According to al-Ghazzali, our beliefs arise from our intellect (*aql*). According to traditional sources, thought is the power of the mind (heart) that facilitates knowledge. Based on this definition, thinking: is the movement of that power that is driven by the intellect. It can only occur when an initial image of the subject is attainable in the mind of the thinker.
>
> Further, the Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the sacred text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge espoused with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression understands the religion, signifying a rational and inquisitive approach to constructing a worldview of Islam. Islam, in other words, advises analytical knowledge and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely dogmatic approach. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions faith based on detailed analysis as opposed to undigested and un-comprehended faith. The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the clerics of all the leading schools of thought....
>
> Thus, if there are hadith reports, or any factual reports for that matter, which do not stand to reason and understanding, they would be most likely discounted and abandoned, with the exception only of devotional matters (*ibadat*) which are based on faith and submission more than on rational analysis....
>
> Another feature of the Quranic vision of thinking is indicated in its emphasis on wisdom and good judgment (*hikmah*) which signifies the quality of thinking, its regard for values, and its outcome. Wisdom and good judgment can easily be said to be more important than technical know-how and expertise, as it can guide expert knowledge

as to its proper application and the attainment of excellence.

The Quran mentions *hikmah* twenty times, and in about ten of these it is immediately preceded by the word *kitab*, which is a reference to divine scripture—primarily the Quran, but also other divinely revealed scriptures. The text thus says with reference to Jesus that God Most High will teach him the Scripture and wisdom (*hikmah*), the Torah and the Gospel....

The juxtaposition of book and wisdom is often contextualized by a reference to the sending of prophets who teach the people and guide them with scripture and wisdom as it is said of the Prophet Muhammad (as well as) ... the descendants of Prophet Abraham.

The holistic, superior, and indivisible value of *hikmah* in the Quran is underscored in one of its verses to the effect that when God bestows wisdom on someone that person is indeed granted an immense source of goodness.... To mention wisdom together with the Book evidently means that the Quran should be read with wisdom and divorcing the one from the other by taking a totally dogmatic approach to the Quran goes against the divine purpose and intention of its revelation. To read the Quran in the light of wisdom thus means a comprehensive reading that reaches beyond the obvious meaning of its words to encapsulate the goal and purpose of its message and then also reflection on the ways and means of how its benefits can be realized for the individual and society.[1]

QURANIC CHAPTER 21: THE PROPHETS (AL-ANBIYA)

SIGNS 21:1-21:10

Makkah: *The reckoning for humanity was near*
while they are ones who turn aside in heedlessness. (21:1)
Approaches them not a remembrance from their Lord,
that which is renewed, but they listened to it while they play (21:2)
being ones whose hearts are ones that are diverted,
and they kept secret, conspiring secretly those who did wrong?
Is this other than a mortal like you?
Then, will you approach sorcery while you perceive? (21:3)
He said: My Lord knows The Word of the heavens and the earth.
And He is The Hearing, The Knowing. (21:4)
Nay! They said: Jumbled nightmares! Nay!
He but devised it! Nay!
He is but a poet!
Let him bring us a sign
as the ancient ones were sent! (21:5)
No town believed before them

of whom We caused to perish.
Will they, then, believe? (21:6)
And We sent not before you
but men to whom We reveal.
So ask the People of the Remembrance
if you had not been knowing. (21:7)
And We made them not lifeless bodies
that eat not food nor had they been
ones who will dwell forever. (21:8)
Again, We were sincere in the promise.
So We rescued them and whom We will.
We caused the ones who are excessive to perish. (21:9)
Surely, We caused a Book to descend to you
in which is your Remembrance.
Will you not, then, be reasonable? (21:10)

COMMENTARY°

The flow of the sections also includes some scenes of the Day of Judgment in which we find the same meanings and concepts reflected again as part of the reality of that great day.

We see, then, how varying cadences employed in the chapter serve the same purpose of alerting the human mind so that it recognizes the truth of the faith preached by the last of God's messengers. For people cannot receive the message while indulging in play, turning away and paying little heed to it, as they are described in the opening signs: (21:1-21:3)

The section is distinguished by a very powerful opening that shakes the careless who are preoccupied with the petty concerns of this world while the reckoning draws ever closer to them. Signs and indicators are given to them while they continue to turn their backs on divine guidance. The situation is grave, yet they remain totally unaware of its seriousness. Whenever they receive a new Quranic warning, they respond with ridicule, persisting in their playful negligence. Their hearts can only attend to their own pleasure. It should be pointed out here that in Quranic usage, the term, 'heart', is synonymous with mind as it refers to the faculty of contemplation, reflection and thought. *The reckoning for humanity was near while they are ones who turn aside in heedlessness. Approaches them not a remembrance from their Lord, that which is renewed, but they listened to it while they play being ones whose hearts are ones that are diverted, and they kept secret, conspiring secretly those who did wrong? Is this other than a mortal like you? Then, will you approach*

sorcery while you perceive? (21:1-21:3)

It is the chapter that starts with: *The reckoning for humanity was near while they are ones who turn aside in heedlessness.* (21:1) This is the marked difference between a living heart which interacts with what it receives and a dead one which covers its lifelessness in a shroud of jest and play. The latter type does not respond to reminders because it is devoid of the elements of life. *Being ones whose hearts are ones that are diverted, and they kept secret, conspiring secretly those who did wrong? Is this other than a mortal like you? Then, will you approach sorcery while you perceive?*(21:3)

Dead as their hearts were, they could not but be shaken by the Quran. Hence they try to resist its influence with false excuses. They whisper to one another that Muhammad is a man, and wonder how they could believe a message preached by a human being like themselves. They allege that what he says is plain magic, and ask how they could surrender themselves to sorcery when they have eyes with which to look.

The Prophet is instructed to leave the whole matter between him and the ungrateful to God, making it clear that He knows what they secretly say among themselves. He also informs him of their scheming by which they tried to divert the effect of the Quran on themselves and on other people.

Whatever people may say in private is known to God, because He knows everything that takes place in heaven and earth. *He said: My Lord knows The Word of the heavens and the earth. And He is The Hearing, The Knowing.* (21:4) When they conspire and scheme, He is fully aware of their scheming. Nothing escapes His knowledge. They were at a loss as to how they should describe the Quran in order to neutralize its appeal. Hence they variously alleged that it was sorcery, a series of confused dreams related by Muhammad, poetry, or mere fabrication. The Quran reported their claims as they uttered them. *Nay! They said: Jumbled nightmares! Nay! He but devised it!* (21:5) They could not agree on any one view or description to explain the magnetism the Quran had on people. None of their allegations or justifications had any value. Hence, they roamed from one claim to another, betraying their puzzlement. Feeling themselves at a terrible loss, they decided to get around the whole question by demanding a miracle similar to those given to some early prophets: *Nay! He is but a poet! Let him bring us a sign as the ancient ones were sent!* (21:5)

Miraculous signs and events were given in the past, but the communities to which they were shown did not believe as a result. Hence they were destroyed in accordance with God's law which seals the

fate of any community which continues to reject the truth after having been given a miraculous sign of it. *No town believed before them of whom We caused to perish. Will they, then, believe?* (21:6) When stubborn rejection of the truth reaches a point that it continues even after a tangible, physical, miraculous sign is given, then all excuses are invalid. People who continue with such rejection seal their own fate and they are destroyed as a result.

In His infinite wisdom, God chose His Messengers from among human beings. *No town believed before them of whom We caused to perish. Will they, then, believe? And We sent not before you but men to whom We reveal. So ask the People of the Remembrance if you had not been knowing.* (21:6-7) They received His revelations and called on people to believe in Him on the basis of such revelations. Those noble Messengers of God were men with human bodies. God did not make them of a special type, so as not to eat food. Food is a basic necessity for human survival, and God's messengers, who were human, were not immortal. Such is the law God has set, and if those Arabs were unaware of it, then they should ask the people who received earlier revelations, because they knew earlier Prophets.

Such has been God's law in selecting His messengers, and His law in saving them with their followers when He destroyed the wrongdoers who rejected the truth embodied in their messages: *Again, We were sincere in the promise. So We rescued them and whom We will. We caused the ones who are excessive to perish.* (21:9)

God reminds the pagan Arabs who oppressed the Prophet Muhammad, denying his message and persecuting him and his followers, that they are subject to His law for their transgression. He also makes it clear to them that it is an aspect of the grace He bestows on them that He has not sent them any physical miracle, because that would have spelt their doom if they continued to reject the truth as older communities did. Instead, He sent them a book which imparts honor to them, since it is in their own language. This book sets their life on the right footing and makes of them a community entitled to lead humanity and be respected by them. Moreover, this book invites thinking people to reflect on it and elevate themselves by implementing it: *Surely, We caused a Book to descend to you in which is your Remembrance. Will you not, then, be reasonable?* (21:10)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experi-

ences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QUESTIONS

Feel free to raise questions about passages you read.

What does one of the previous signs say?
What does it imply?
Assume? Explain it.
Does it contradict anything you know or suspect to be true?
How do you know?
How could you find out?
Does this fit in with your experience? In what way? Why or why not?
What might someone who disagreed with it say?
Does the text leave out relevant information?
Does it favor one perspective? Which?
Why do you suppose it was written this way?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I feel free to raise questions about the meaning of the Quranic signs I read.
I can discuss my interpretations of what I read.

Lesson 73(2). Critical Thinking Strategy Listening Critically: The Art of Silent Dialogue

Critical thinkers know that listening can either be done passively and uncritically or actively and critically. This is the case whether you are listening to the Quran in a language you understand or listening to your teacher's lesson. You know that it is not easy to understand what the Quranic text or another person is saying and then to integrate those thoughts into your own. When we compare speaking and listening, we know that when we speak, we hold on to our own ideas. We are able to arrange them in some order. We express our thoughts with which we are familiar. Listening to another, however is more difficult. In listening, we have to take the words we are hearing and translate them into our own words and ideas for them to make sense. We have not experienced the same things as the speaker. It is difficult to anticipate where the speaker's words are taking them. You have to be attentive to what the other person is saying. All of this requires active listening. Developing into an active listener requires time and practice. It also requires asking key questions.

Quranic Chapter 21: The Prophets (al-Anbiya) Signs 21:11-21:29

Makkah: *How many a town We damaged*
that had been one that is unjust
and caused to grow after them another folk? (21:11)
Then, when they were conscious of Our might,
that is when they make haste from it! (21:12)
Make not haste, but return to what you were given
of ease in it and to your dwellings,
so that perhaps you will be asked. (21:13)
They said: O woe to us!
Truly, we had been ones who are unjust! (21:14)
Then, truly, they ceased not calling that out until
We made them as stubble, ones silent and stilled. (21:15)
And We created not the heavens and the earth
and what is between them as ones in play. (21:16)
If We wanted We would have taken some diversion.
We would take it to Ourselves from
that which proceeds from Our Presence
if We had been ones who do so. (21:17)
Nay! We hurl The Truth against falsehood so it prevails over it.
That is when falsehood is that which vanishes away.
And woe to you for what you allege. (21:18)

And to Him belongs whoever is in the heavens and the earth.
And whoever is near Him, they grow not arrogant
to worship Him, nor they be weary. (21:19)
They glorify Him nighttime and daytime.
They never decrease. (21:20)
Or took they gods to themselves from the earth,
they, ones who revive the dead? (21:21)
If there had been gods in it—other than God— certainly,
both would have gone to ruin.
Then, glory be to God! Lord of the Throne!
High above what they allege. (21:22)
He will not be asked as to what He accomplishes,
but they will be asked. (21:23)
Or took they gods to themselves other than He?
Say: Prepare your proof.
This is a Remembrance for him who is with me
and a Remembrance of him before me.
Nay! Most of them know not The Truth,
so they are ones who turn aside. (21:24)
*And We sent not before **you** any Messenger,*
but We reveal to him that there is no god but I,
so worship Me. (21:25)
And they said: The Merciful took to Himself a son.
Glory be to Him! Nay! Honored servants! (21:26)
They precede Him not in saying
and they act by His command. (21:27)
He knows what is in advance of them
and what is behind them and they intercede
not but for him with whom He was content.
And they are dreading Him,
ones who are apprehensive. (21:28)
And whoever says of them:
Truly, I am a god other than He, then,
We will give recompense to him with hell.
Thus, We give recompense
to the ones who are unjust. (21:29)

COMMENTARY°

It was an act of divine grace that God revealed the Quran to them, rather than giving them the miracle they demanded. Had such a miracle been sent to them and had they continued to deny the truth, a calamity like those that destroyed earlier ungrateful would have

brought about their doom. At this point the chapter portrays a scene of total destruction and annihilation: (21:11-21:15)

The Arabic term rendered here as 'stubble', carries strong connotations of a strike that splits something into pieces. Moreover, its sound adds further connotations of complete destruction. Those communities persisted in their evil and met a sudden fate that left no trace of them. *How many a town We damaged that had been one that is unjust and caused to grow after them another folk?* (21:11) We note also that the Arabic text uses the word *qaryah* which means village or town with the verb denoting the breaking into fragments, but it uses *qawm*, or 'people', when it speaks of raising a new community, because it is such people who build a new civilization. In this way, the destruction is rendered more powerful, which is in line with the distinctive characteristics of the Quranic style.

Indeed, the words the Quran uses here add, by their very sound, strong connotations of an overwhelming strike that leaves everything lifeless. We look and see how those communities ran around frantically as God's power struck their land. They appear like trapped mice jumping here and there before they fall motionless: *Then, when they were conscious of Our might, that is when they make haste from it!* (21:12) They run so that they might leave a town which they felt was doomed. They run as though their very running will save them from God's power. It is not that they imagine that they are faster than God's strike; it is a thoughtless movement, like that of trapped mice.

They are then sarcastically told: *Make not haste, but return to what you were given of ease in it and to your dwellings, so that perhaps you will be asked.* (21:13) You do not need to run away from your homes. Go back to your luxuries and comforts. You may perchance be asked about all this luxury and how you have used it. But the time for questioning is already over, and the Quran delivers this final cataclysm as bitter sarcasm.

This brings their situation clearly before their eyes, for there is no means of escape. They cannot run away from or flee God's punishment. Hence, they change tactic and admit their faults: *They said: O woe to us! Truly, we had been ones who are unjust!* (21:14) But the time for all this is over. They can say what they like, but it is all to no avail. They are left to their devices until they are lifeless: *Then, truly, they ceased not calling that out until We made them as stubble, ones silent and stilled.* (21:15) But it is a field of humans, all of whom are motionless, lifeless; yet only a minute earlier, it was bustling, vibrant, full of life.

At this point the chapter establishes a link between the faith already mentioned, its essential laws under which the ungrateful are

punished and the fundamental truth and seriousness which form the pivot around which the whole universe turns.

Had God wanted to indulge in a pastime, He would have chosen something for Himself alone; it would have nothing to do with His mortal creatures. But this is merely a theoretical assumption: *If We wanted We would have taken some diversion.* (21:17) The mode of expression here indicates that both parts of the conditional are negated. God has not willed to indulge in a pastime, and none has taken place. Besides, it never will, because God has not willed it in the first place: *We would take it to Ourselves from that which proceeds from Our Presence if We had been ones who do so.* (21:17)

But the law that operates for all time is that there is no such thing as a pastime in respect of God. There are only seriousness and truth. Thus, intrinsic truth will triumph over incidental falsehood: *Nay! We hurl The Truth against falsehood so it prevails over it. That is when falsehood is that which vanishes away. And woe to you for what you allege.* (21:18)

The Arabic particle *bal*, rendered here as 'nay', signifies turning away from whatever is at hand. Here it indicates putting aside this point about having a pastime to turn to a more serious point about the real world and the laws operating in it which ensure that falsehood is vanquished and the truth triumphant. The Quranic verse paints this in a vivid picture, showing the truth as a missile hurled by God at falsehood, breaking its head and so utterly destroying it.

Those who believe in God entertain no doubt that His promise will come true, or that the truth enjoys prime position in the structure of the universe and its system. They are also certain that victory will eventually belong to the truth. Hence, if God tests them by allowing falsehood a temporary triumph, they realize that this is merely a test God puts them through so as to eradicate their weakness or give them what they lack. He wants them to be fit to receive the victorious truth, and to make them the tool by which He accomplishes His purpose. Thus, He lets them go through the test, to equip them properly for their role. If they hasten to remedy their weakness and redress their drawbacks, God will shorten their period of test and accomplish through them whatever He wishes. The ultimate result is a foregone conclusion: *That is when falsehood is that which vanishes away.* (21:18) God accomplishes what He wills.

Thus the Quran puts this fundamental fact before the ungrateful who are quick to hurl their false accusations at the Quran and the Prophet. They describe the Quran as sorcery, poetry or mere fabrication, when it is the truth that smashes their falsehood and causes it to wither away. This is followed by a warning against the eventual

outcome of their accusations: *And woe to you for what you allege.* (21:18)

The chapter goes on to show them a model of obedience to God and worshipping Him, contrasted with their rejection and turning away. The model shows creatures that are closer to God than them, yet they continue to worship Him, obeying His every order without fail: *And to Him belongs whoever is in the heavens and the earth. And whoever is near Him, they grow not arrogant to worship Him, nor they be weary. They glorify Him nighttime and daytime. They never decrease.* (21:19-21:20)

'Those who are in the heavens and on earth' are known only to God who knows everything about them. Human knowledge is certain only of human existence, while believers are certain also of the existence of the angels and the jinn because both are mentioned in the Quran. But we know of them only what God, their Creator, has told us. There may be other intelligent creatures on other planets, with forms and natures that are suited to those planets. But the knowledge of all this rests only with God.

Thus, the chapter paints a picture of creatures glorifying God and extolling His praises at all times. At the same time, the ungrateful' claims about their multiple deities are strongly criticized. The chapter provides irrefutable evidence of God's Oneness by virtue of what we see in the constant system that permeates the universe, testifying that it is all run by the will of God, the One who manages and conducts all affairs. It also provides evidence from earlier scriptures given to other communities. (21:21-21:25)

As it receives a clear message of the system governing the whole universe, a straight, uncorrupted nature will instinctively testify to the unity of the system and the will that has initiated it. It will acknowledge the Oneness of the Creator who conducts all affairs in this consistent and harmonious universe, which suffers from no inherent defect in formation or from any impediment to its progress. *If there had been gods in it—other than God— certainly, both would have gone to ruin. Then, glory be to God! Lord of the Throne! High above what they allege.* (21:22)

They assign partners to Him when He is in control of all and in need of none. For, He is "Lord of the Throne". A throne is a symbol of kingdom, real authority and exaltation. What they claim is absolutely false, and the universe, its system and freedom from corruptive elements, testifies to this. *He will not be asked as to what He accomplishes, but they will be asked.* (21:23) Since when could the One who controls the whole universe be questioned, and who could question Him when He holds sway over all His servants? Indeed, His

will is free, unlimited, beyond restraint, even by the system His will has chosen to govern the universe. Questioning and accountability are subject to certain established criteria and defined limits. It is the free will that defines such limits and establishes such criteria, but such free will cannot be subject to these limits and criteria, while creatures are subject to them. Hence, they will undoubtedly be held to account.

Needless to say, we remain ignorant of the reasons, causes, effects and objectives that apply to the universe.

It is the One who knows, manages and controls all that operates His will, conducts all matters and controls all things. *He will not be asked as to what He accomplishes, but they will be asked.*(21: 23)

Having provided this irrefutable evidence based on the nature of the universe, the chapter asks them whether they can support their claims about multiple deities with any evidence derived from their scriptures: *Or took they gods to themselves other than He? Say: Prepare your proof. This is a Remembrance for him who is with me and a Remembrance of him before me. Nay! Most of them know not The Truth, so they are ones who turn aside.* (21:24)

Here is the Quran which incorporates the message given to the Prophet's contemporaries, and there are the scriptures containing the messages delivered by earlier messengers. In none of these is there any mention of partners with God. All divine faiths are based on the true concept of God's Oneness. Where, then, did those who are ungrateful get this false concept of multiple deities when it cannot be supported by logical or religious argument? (21:24)

The chapter then states the nature of what was revealed to all Messengers sent to different communities before the Prophet Muhammad's time: *And We sent not before you any Messenger, but We reveal to him that there is no god but I, so worship Me.* (21:25) God's Oneness is indeed the basic essential element in divine faith, ever since God sent His first Messenger to humanity. Nothing has changed in that. God, the Creator who must be worshipped is One, without partners. The truth of God and Lordship over the universe is a single issue that cannot be separated. God has no partners, whether in the sphere of God or in that of worship. This fact ranks alongside the basic essential laws of the universe and is classified with them. Like them, its truth is unassailable.

The chapter then picks up the claims of the ungrateful alleging that God has a son. This is one of the absurdities of ignorance: (21:26-21:29)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions,** (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

GUIDE TO LISTENING CRITICALLY

Listen carefully to what the Quranic signs are saying.
Take them seriously.
Look for reasons and evidence among them.
Recognize and reflect on any assumptions.
Discover implications and consequences.
Seek examples and analogies to them.
Seek to distinguish what one knows from what one merely assumes.
Seek to enter empathetically into the perspectives of others.
Be on the alert for inconsistencies, vagueness and other possible problems in thought in your classroom discussions.
Maintain a healthy sense of skepticism.

It is important to engage in an assignment that actually teaches critical listening. This will help you learn how to listen critically to what others are saying or asking you to do. You have to understand the assignment well in order to do a good job in following it. You can describe discussions on videotapes about the Quran in writing, then compare your version in small groups with others, trying to accurately reconstruct what you heard. Whenever possible, you should watch the piece a second time to verify what you heard or settle conflicting accounts of what you heard and what others heard. While watching a video, take notes. Afterward, compare and discuss your notes with your classmates. A leader of your group could every few minutes stop the video and have you outline the main point and raise critical questions.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to study and learn skills that I had not been good at.
I practice these skills whenever possible.
I am able to recognize and correct your weaknesses because I know this is a sign of gaining strong thinking skills.

LESSON 73(3). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
RAISING QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, ISSUES

Critical thinkers constantly ask themselves questions. Take the example of al-Ghazzali who writes in *Deliverance from Error:*

> So I began by saying to myself: What I seek is knowledge of the true meaning of things. Of necessity, therefore, I must inquire into just what the true meaning of knowledge is.
>
> Then it became clear to me that sure and certain knowledge is that in which the thing known is made so manifest that no doubt clings to it, nor is it accompanied by the possibility of error and deception, nor can the mind even suppose such a possibility. Furthermore, safety from error must accompany the certainty to such a degree that, if someone proposed to show it to be false—for example, a man who would turn a stone into gold and a stick into a snake — his feat would not induce any doubt or denial. For if I know that ten is more than three, and then someone were to say: No, on the contrary, three is more than ten, as is proved by my turning this stick into a snake—and if he were to do just that and I were to see him do it, I would not doubt my knowledge because of his fear. The only effect it would have on me would be to make me wonder how he could do such a thing. But there would be no doubt at all about what I knew!
>
> I realized, then, that whatever I did not know in this way and was not certain of with this kind of certainty was unreliable and unsure knowledge, and that every knowledge unaccompanied by safety from error is not sure and certain knowledge.
>
> I then scrutinized all my cognitions and found myself devoid of any knowledge answering the previous description except in the case of sense-data and the self- evident truths. So I said: Now that despair has befallen me, the only hope I have of acquiring an insight into obscure matters is to start from things that are perfectly clear, namely sense-data and the self-evident truths. Hence I must first study these thoroughly in order to reach a sure answer to these questions: Is my reliance on sense-data and my safety from error in the case of self-evident truths of the same kind as that which I formerly had regarding the dicta of authority, and of the same kind as that which most men have regarding speculative matters? Or is it a verifiable safety containing no deception or danger?
>
> With great earnestness, therefore, I began to reflect on my sense-data to see if I could make myself doubt them. This protracted effort to induce doubt finally brought me to the point where my soul would

not allow me to admit safety from error even in the case of my sense-data. Rather it began to be open to doubt about them and to say: Whence comes your reliance on sense-data? The strongest of the senses is the sense of sight. Now this looks at a shadow and sees it standing still and motionless and judges that motion must be denied. Then, due to experience and observation, an hour later it knows that the shadow is moving, and that it did not move in a sudden spurt, but so gradually and imperceptibly that it was never completely at rest. Sight also looks at a star and sees it as something small, the size of a dinar: then geometrical proofs demonstrate that it surpasses the earth in size. In the case of this and of similar instances of sense-data the sense-judge makes its judgments, but the reason-judge refutes it and repeatedly gives it the lie in an incontrovertible fashion.[3]

QURANIC CHAPTER 21: THE PROPHETS (AL-ANBIYA)
SIGNS 21:30-21:41

Makkah: *Consider not those who were ungrateful*
that the heavens and the earth
had been interwoven and We unstitched them?
And We made every living thing of water.
Will they, then, not believe? (21:30)
And We made firm mountains on the earth
so that it should not vibrate with them.
And We made in it ravines as ways,
so that perhaps they will be truly guided. (21:31)
And We made heaven as a guarded roof.
Yet they are ones who turn aside from its signs. (21:32)
And it is He Who created the nighttime and the daytime,
the sun and the moon, each swimming in orbit. (21:33)
And We assigned not to any mortal before you immortality.
If you were to die will they be ones who dwell forever? (21:34)
Every soul is one that experiences death.
And We will try you with the worst and good as a test.
And to Us you will be returned. (21:35)
And when those who were ungrateful saw thee,
they take you to themselves not but in mockery:
Ha! Is this he who mentions your gods?
And they, for Remembrance of The Merciful,
they are ones who are ungrateful. (21:36)
The human being was created of haste.
I will cause you to see My signs, so seek not to hasten! (21:37)
And they say: When will this promise be

if you had been ones who are sincere? (21:38)
If those who were ungrateful but know at the time
when they will not limit the fire from their faces,
nor from their backs
and they will not be helped! (21:39)
Nay! It will approach them suddenly.
Then, it will dumfound them
so they will not be able to come back
nor will they be given respite. (21:40)
And, certainly, Messengers were ridiculed before thee.
Then, those who derided them were surrounded
by what they had been ridiculing. (21:41)

COMMENTARY°

The chapter has so far given us several types of evidence drawn from the universe, all testifying to God's Oneness, and stated a number of arguments denying any possibility of there being more than one God. It has also provided evidence that addresses people's hearts directly. Now the chapter takes the human heart by the hand to contemplate some of the great phenomena in the universe, as it is wisely managed by God. Yet the ungrateful remain heedless of the clear signs revealed all about them. For those who look however, the universe reveals aspects of itself that leave our minds in total amazement when we contemplate them with an open heart and alert senses. *Consider not those who were ungrateful that the heavens and the earth had been interwoven and We unstitched them?* (21:30) The next sentence of the verse states: We have made out of water every living thing. *And We made every living thing of water. Will they, then, not believe?* (21:30) This short sentence states a great and crucial fact. Indeed, scientists shower praise on Darwin for having identified that water was the first environment where life began.

For fourteen centuries, the Quran has drawn the attention of ungrateful to the great marvels God has placed in the universe, wondering how they could deny what they see everywhere: Will they not, then, believe? *And We made every living thing of water. Will they, then, not believe?* (21:30) How could they persist in their disbelief when everything around them in this universe inevitably leads to faith in God, the Creator, the Wise who conducts all affairs?

The chapter continues to point out awesome scenes of the universe: *And We made firm mountains on the earth so that it should not vibrate with them.* (21:31) The Quran, then, states that the mountains, firm as they are, maintain the balance of the earth so that it

does not sway or shake. This balance may be maintained in various forms, such as setting a balance between the external pressure on the face of the earth and the one inside it, i.e. internally. Or it may be that the height of a mountain in one place is counterbalanced by a deep valley in another. Whatever the case may be, this statement confirms that the mountains have a direct bearing on the balance and stability of the earth. It is the domain of scientific study to identify and prove how this stability and balance are achieved. But it is the Quranic text that invites us to contemplate such facts.

Let us now follow the magnificent aspects of God's creation in the wide universe: *And We made in it ravines as ways, so that perhaps they will be truly guided.*(21:31) The pathways made in the mountains in the shape of depressions between its high peaks assist the traveller in finding his way yet there is also another subtle implication here that refers to faith. It may be that travelers will find their way to accepting the faith just as they find their way through the mountains along such paths.

In Arabic, the sky refers to everything that is above us. We see above us something like a ceiling. The Quran states that the sky is a well-secured canopy. It is secure from any defect or contamination, since it symbolizes the height from which God's revelations are bestowed. *And We made heaven as a guarded roof. Yet they are ones who turn aside from its signs.* (21:32)

Finally a reference is made to time and place phenomena that are very close to us and our life on earth: *And it is He Who created the nighttime and the daytime, the sun and the moon, each swimming in orbit.* (21:33)

The night and day are two universal phenomena, while the sun and the moon are two great celestial bodies that are closely related to human life on earth. When we contemplate the succession of the day and night and the movement of the sun and the moon, we realize that they are so accurate as to admit no defect, and so consistent as to allow no failure. Such contemplation is sufficient to guide our hearts and minds to the fact that the system that applies to them is one, the will governing them is one and their great Maker is one.

This first passage of the chapter concludes with an outline that links the laws relevant to creation, formation and sustenance with those relevant to the nature and destiny of human life: *And We assigned not to any mortal before you immortality. If you were to die will they be ones who dwell forever? Every soul is one that experiences death. And We will try you with the worst and good as a test. And to Us you will be returned.* (21:34-21:35)

No human being has ever been granted immortality. Every crea-

ture is bound to die, and whatever has a beginning will certainly have an end. So if God's Messenger is also destined to die, why do they think they would be granted life everlasting? Since they cannot hope to live for ever, why do they not behave like ones who will inevitably taste death? Why do they not reflect and contemplate?

This: *Every soul is one that experiences death. And We will try you with the worst and good as a test. And to Us you will be returned* (21:35) is the law that governs life. It has no exceptions or exemptions. The living, then, must take this into account and prepare themselves for it. This short journey on earth is bound to come to an end, and its end is the death of every living thing. All shall return to God. But whatever happens to us during this trip through life, whether good or bad, is meant as a test:

The ungrateful deny the very existence of God, the Most Merciful, who has created the universe and set the rules that operate in it and sustain its existence. *And when those who were ungrateful saw **you**, they take **you** to themselves not but in mockery: Ha! Is this he who mentions your gods? And they, for Remembrance of The Merciful, they are ones who are ungrateful.* (21:36) They object to the fact that God's Messenger, Muhammad, speaks out against their deities, showing such inanimate idols to be useless. Yet they themselves rudely deny God, the Most Merciful. How singular!

They hurl abuse and mockery at God's Messenger, saying that it is unacceptable that he should criticize their idol worship. *And they, for Remembrance of The Merciful, they are ones who are ungrateful.* (21:36) Yet they, creatures of God as they are, find nothing wrong with the arrogance that leads them to deny God's existence and reject the Quran He has revealed to them. The irony of their attitude exposes to the full the far- reaching corruption that affects their nature and impairs their judgment.

What is more, they try to hasten the punishment against which the Prophet warns them. For, by nature, the human being is hasty: *The human being was created of haste. I will cause you to see My signs, so seek not to hasten! And they say: When will this promise be if you had been ones who are sincere?* (21:37-21:38)

Haste is present in the human being's very nature and constitution. He always stretches his eyes to what lies ahead, beyond the present moment, aiming to grasp it with his own hand. He wants to achieve, the moment it flashes in his mind, all that seems desirable. He wants to see all that is promised to him, even though it may be to his detriment. Such is man's nature, unless he establishes a firm relationship with God which gives him strength and reassurance. He will then trust to God's wisdom, leaving His will to run its course

without hastening events. For faith combines trust with patience and reassurance.

Those ungrateful hastened God's punishment, wondering when the promise of punishment in the hereafter, as well as in this life, would be fulfilled. The Quran paints here for them a scene of the suffering in the hereafter, while also warning them against a similar punishment to that which befell earlier communities which rejected the faith: *If those who were ungrateful but know at the time when they will not limit the fire from their faces, nor from their backs and they will not be helped! Nay! It will approach them suddenly. Then, it will dumfound them so they will not be able to come back nor will they be given respite. And, certainly, Messengers were ridiculed before thee. Then, those who derided them were surrounded by what they had been ridiculing.* (21:39-21:41)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

DEVELOP QUESTIONS ABOUT QUESTIONS

Who can best phrase this question?
Is there another way to put this question?
What is the advantage of putting the question this way?
How would you put the question?
How does the Quran teach us to think critically?
What is the question I am trying to answer?
Can I put the question in a better way?
Is the question I am asking clear? or too complex?
How do you evaluate the question?
What would need to be done to answer this question?
How can we find out?
What does this question assume?
Would x put the question differently?
How could someone settle this question?
Can we break this question down at all?
Is the question clear? Do we understand it?
Is this question easy or hard to answer? Why?
Does this question ask us to evaluate something?
Do we all agree that this is the question?

To answer this question, what questions would we have to answer first?
I'm not sure I understand how you are interpreting the main question at issue.
Is this the same issue as x?
How would x put the issue?
Why is this question important?
How does the Quran describe the just person?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I loved learning how to ask questions.
I was able to ask questions in class.
I incorporated questions into my papers.
I realized that 1/6th of the Quran are questions.
I hope to study them and learn more about them over time.

LESSON 73(4). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY REASONING DIALOGICALLY: COMPARING INTERPRETATIONS

Dialogical thinking refers to thinking that involves a dialogue or extended exchange between different points of view. Whenever we consider concepts or issues deeply, we naturally explore their connections to other ideas and issues within different domains or points of view. Critical thinkers need to be able to engage in fruitful, exploratory dialogue, proposing ideas, probing their roots, considering subject matter insights and evidence, testing ideas, and moving between various points of view. When we think, we often engage in dialogue, either inwardly or aloud with others. We need to integrate critical thinking skills into that dialogue so that it is as fruitful as possible. Questioning is one form of dialogical thinking.

Reasoning dialogically means using a thinking that involves a dialogue between different points of view as the Quranic example shows. Deeply explore the connections to the ideas expressed in these Quranic signs. You should be guided to first engaging in an exploratory dialogue where you study the ideas, explore the roots of these ideas, consider the evidence of the subject matter testing the ideas as you move between multiple points of view. You should engage in an inward dialogue with yourself or an outward one with others. You need to learn how to integrate the Quranic critical thinking skills with your dialogue.

QURANIC CHAPTER 21: THE PROPHETS (AL-ANBIYA) SIGNS 21:42-21:50

Makkah: *Say: Who will guard you in the nighttime*
and the daytime from The Merciful?
Nay! They, from the Remembrance of their Lord,
are ones who turn aside. (21:42)
Or secure them their gods from Us?
They are not able to help themselves,
nor will they be rendered safe from Us. (21:43)
Nay! We gave enjoyment to these, their fathers
until their lifetime was long for them.
Consider they not that We approach the earth?
We reduce it of its outlying parts.
Or will they be the ones who are the victors? (21:44)
Say: I warn you only by the revelation.
But hear not the unwilling to hear,
the calling to them when they are warned. (21:45)
And if a breath afflicted them of punishment of your Lord,

they would, surely, say: O woe to us!
Truly, we had been ones who are unjust. (21:46)
And We will lay down the balances of equity
on the Day of Resurrection.
Then, no soul will be wronged at all.
And even if it had been the weight of a grain
of a mustard seed We will bring it.
And We sufficed as Ones Who Reckon. (21:47)
And certainly We gave Moses and Aaron the Criterion
between right and wrong and an illumination
and a Remembrance for the ones who are God-conscious, (21:48)
those who dread their Lord in the unseen
while they are ones who are apprehensive of the Hour. (21:49)
This is a blessed Remembrance We caused to descend.
Are you, then, ones who know not of it? (21:50)

COMMENTARY°

It is God who watches over every soul by night and day. He is the Most Merciful. Indeed, infinite mercy is His great attribute. Other than Him there is no one to watch over or protect anyone. Do the ungrateful know anyone else who can protect them? It is a rhetorical question, one which rebukes them for their turning away from God when it is He who watches over them at all times: *Say: Who will guard you in the nighttime and the daytime from The Merciful? Nay! They, from the Remembrance of their Lord, are ones who turn aside.* (21:42)

The same question is put to them again in a different form: (21:43) Such false deities do not have power of their own. They do not have access to God's power. As such, they are utterly helpless.

This sarcastic argument exposes the absurdity of the ungrateful' beliefs. Hence, the chapter stops arguing with them, but adds a moving touch which they feel in their hearts. It directs them to reflect on God's might as He folds the earth underneath triumphant armies. Thus the earth shrinks so that they are confined to a limited space, after they have wielded much power and authority. *Consider they not that We approach the earth? We reduce it of its outlying parts. Or will they be the ones who are the victors?* (21:44)

In its inimitable style, the Quran shows God's hand as it folds up the once vast space, making borders cave in, and reducing huge distances, in a splendid scene that combines fine movement and awesome feelings. It then asks rhetorically: *Or will they be the ones who are the victors?* (21:44) Is it that what happens to others does not

then apply to them?

At the height of this awesome scene, which leaves hearts trembling, the Prophet is instructed to deliver the final warning: *Say: I warn you only by the revelation. But hear not the unwilling to hear, the calling to them when they are warned.* (21:45) Let them, then, beware lest they should be the deaf who do not hear! It is the deaf who will suffer the fate of having the earth shrunk beneath them, and the hand of the Almighty smashing their power, doing away with them and their luxuries.

The chapter continues its discourse making a profound effect on people's hearts. It describes those very ungrateful as they begin to suffer God's punishment: *And if a breath afflicted them of punishment of your Lord, they would, surely, say: O woe to us! Truly, we had been ones who are unjust.* (21:46) In Arabic, the word, *nafhah*, used in this verse for 'breath' is normally associated with mercy and grace, but here it is used in the context of suffering so as to imply that even the slightest breath of God's punishment is sufficient to make them ready to confess.

The present passage concludes with a final scene from the Day of Reckoning:*And We will lay down the balances of equity on the Day of Resurrection. Then, no soul will be wronged at all. And even if it had been the weight of a grain of a mustard seed We will bring it. And We sufficed as Ones Who Reckon.* (21:47) The mustard seed here represents the smallest and lightest thing our eyes can see. Yet not even a mustard seed is overlooked or ignored. The scales that are used are so accurate that a single mustard seed makes a difference.

Let people, then, reflect on what they put forward for that day. Let hearts be attentive to the warnings, and let those who turn their backs or indulge in ridicule be warned. They may be able to evade punishment in this life, but on Judgment Day the reckoning takes every little thing into account. The scales then are so accurate that even a tiny seed can make all the difference.

Thus the accurate scales of the hereafter, the unfailing laws of the universe, the rules applicable to advocates of the faith and the laws of human nature converge in perfect harmony, operated by the hand of the Almighty. This testifies to the truth of God's Oneness, the theme that pervades this whole chapter.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experi-

ences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QUESTIONS

How do you understand these signs?
Would others see it this way?
Would they use these words?
How would they describe this? Why?
What exactly do they disagree about? Why?
What does X think is the cause?
Why do they differ?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I understood Quranic dialogical reasoning after studying these verses.

QURANIC CHAPTER 21: THE PROPHETS (AL-ANBIYA)

SIGNS 21:51-21:75

Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (21:51)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (21:52)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (21:53)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (21:54)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (21:55)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (21:56)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (21:57)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (21:58)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (21:59)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (21:60)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (21:61)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (21:62)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (21:63)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (21:64)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (21:65)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (21:66)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (21:67)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (21:68)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (21:69)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (21:70)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (21:72)

Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (21:73)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (21:74)
Makkah: Book 26: Abraham (21:75)

QURANIC CHAPTER 21: THE PROPHETS (AL-ANBIYA) SIGNS 21:76-21:93

Makkah: Book 25: Noah (21:76)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (21:77)
Makkah: Book 28: David and Solomon (21:78)
Makkah: Book 28: David and Solomon (21:79)
Makkah: Book 28: David (21:80)
Makkah: Book 28: Solomon (21:81)
Makkah: Book 28: Solomon (21:82)
Makkah: Book 28: Job (21:83)
Makkah: Book 28: Job (21:84)
Makkah: Book 26: Ishmael; Book 25: Enoch; Book 28: Dhu 'l-Kifl (21:85)
Makkah: Book 26: Ishmael; Book 25: Enoch; Book 28: Dhu 'l-Kifl (21:86)
Makkah: Book 28: Jonah (21:87)
Makkah: Book 28: Jonah (21:88)
Makkah: Book 28: Zechariah (21:89)
Makkah: Book 28: Zechariah, his Wife and Yahya (John) (21:90)
Makkah: Book 28: Mary (21:91)
Makkah: *Truly, this, your community, is one community and I am your Lord so worship Me.* (21:92) *But they cut asunder their affair between them. Yet all of them are ones who return to Us.* (21:93)

COMMENTARY°

Truly, this, your community, is one community and I am your Lord so worship Me. (21:92) This is the community of Prophets: a single community, sharing the same faith, following the same course, and turning to God alone. Thus we have a single community on earth, and a single Lord in heaven. He has no partners. No one can be worshipped but Him. This whole community follows the same line, acknowledging a single will in heaven and on earth. Thus, this whole round dovetails with the central theme of the chapter, emphasizing the right faith based on the concept of God's Oneness, which is confirmed by all universal laws. *But they cut asunder their affair between them. Yet all of them are ones who return to Us.* (21:93)

LESSON 73(5). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY REASONING DIALECTICALLY: EVALUATING INTERPRETATIONS

Dialectical thinking refers to dialogical thinking conducted in order to test the strengths and weaknesses of opposing points of view. Court trials and debates are dialectical in intention. They pit idea against idea, reasoning against counter-reasoning in order to get at the truth of a matter. As soon as we begin to explore ideas, we find that some clash or are inconsistent with others. If we are to integrate our thinking, we need to assess which of the conflicting ideas we will provisionally accept and which we shall provisionally reject, or which parts of the views are strong and which weak, or how the views can be reconciled. You need to develop dialectical reasoning skills, so that your thinking not only moves comfortably between divergent points of view or lines of thought, but also makes some assessments in light of the relative strengths and weaknesses of the evidence or reasoning presented. Therefore, when thinking dialectically, critical thinkers can use critical affective strategies appropriately.

QURANIC CHAPTER 21: THE PROPHETS (AL-ANBIYA) SIGNS 21:94-21:112

Makkah: *So whoever does*
as the ones in accord with morality
and he is one who believes,
then, his endeavoring will not be rejected.
And, truly, We will be One Who Inscribes it for him. (21:94)
And there is a ban on the town that We caused to perish.
They will not return (21:95)
until Gog and Magog are let loose
and they slide down from every slope. (21:96)
And the true promise will be near.
That is when the sight will be that
which fixed in horror of those who were ungrateful!
O woe to us. Surely, we had been in heedlessness of this.
Nay! We had been ones who were unjust. (21:97)
Truly, you and what you worship
other than God are fuel material for hell.
You are the ones who go down to it. (21:98)
If these had been gods, they would never have gone down to it.
All are ones who will dwell in it forever. (21:99)
There will be sobbing in it for them
and they, their gods, will not hear in it. (21:100)

Truly, those to whom there has preceded the fairer from Us,
those are ones who are far removed from it. (21:101)
They will not hear even the low sound of it.
And they, in that for which their souls lusted,
will be ones who will dwell in it forever. (21:102)
The greater terror will not dishearten them
and the angels will admit them:
This is your day that you had been promised! (21:103)
On a Day when We roll up the heavens
like the rolling up of the written scroll of manuscripts,
as We began the first creation,
We will cause it to return. It is a promise from Us.
Truly, We had been ones who do. (21:104)
And, certainly, We wrote down in the Psalms
after the Remembrance that the earth
will be inherited by My servants—
the ones who are in accord with morality. (21:105)
Truly, in this is the delivering of this message for the folk,
ones who worship. (21:106)
And We sent you not but as a mercy for the worlds. (21:107)
Say: It is only revealed to me that your god is One God.
Will you, then, be ones who submit to God? (21:108)
But if they turned away, then, say:
I proclaimed to you all equally.
And I am not informed whether
what you are promised is near or far. (21:109)
Truly, He knows the openly published saying
and He knows what you keep back. (21:110)
And I am not informed so that perhaps
it will be a test for you and an enjoyment for awhile. (21:111)
He said: My Lord! Give You judgment between us
with The Truth. And our Lord is The Merciful,
He Whose help is being sought
against what you allege. (21:112)

COMMENTARY°

Despite the fact that the followers of all Messengers constitute a single community, and despite the fact that all divine messages share the same basis, those followers divided themselves into factions. Each group took a portion and went away, allowing controversy to stir between them, and thus leading to division and hostility. Indeed this happened among the followers of a single messenger,

with some eager to kill others in the name of the faith, which they all shared.

They have divided themselves into factions in this life, but they will all return to God in the life to come:*But they cut asunder their affair between them. Yet all of them are ones who return to Us.* (21:93) The end is with Him, when they will face the reckoning and He requites them for what they do in this present life.

This is the law of action and reward. No one shall suffer any loss of any good deed based on faith. All such deeds are recorded with God who never loses sight of anything. *So whoever does as the ones in accord with morality and he is one who believes, then, his endeavoring will not be rejected. And, truly, We will be One Who Inscribes it for him.* (21:94)

Reward for good action is given in the life to come, even though parts of it may be advanced in this present life. Those cities which suffered total destruction will inevitably return to receive their ultimate requital. It is not possible that they will not be returned: *And there is a ban on the town that We caused to perish. They will not return.* (21:95)

We are then presented with a scene of the Day of Resurrection, starting with a sign that signals its approach. This sign is the opening of the gates for Gog and Magog: *Until Gog and Magog are let loose and they slide down from every slope. And the true promise will be near. That is when the sight will be that which fixed in horror of those who were ungrateful! O woe to us. Surely, we had been in heedlessness of this. Nay! We had been ones who were unjust.* (21:96-21:97)

What is intended here is to describe what happens on that day when it actually arrives, and to introduce it with a miniature scene of what is familiar to human beings. This is the scene of Gog and Magog being let loose, and their swarming down from every corner in a fast moving image. The Quran often uses notions that are familiar to *usn* and elevates these to draw scenes of the hereafter.

The scene portrayed here stresses the element of surprise that takes the onlookers: *That is when the sight will be that which fixed in horror of those who were ungrateful! O woe to us. Surely, we had been in heedlessness of this. Nay! We had been ones who were unjust.* (21:97) They shall not wink because of the great horror that has taken them by surprise. The text uses inversion here to bring forward the actual stirring in order to provide added emphasis.

The chapter does not go on to describe their condition further. Instead, it shows them speaking to give more life to the scene: *O woe to us. Surely, we had been in heedlessness of this. Nay! We had been ones who were unjust.* (21:97) This is the cry of one in utter distress.

He is at a total loss, his eyes are stirring and he invokes a curse upon himself, acknowledging his past errors, and repents when repentance is no longer of any use.

When this confession is made in such shock, the final verdict is announced. It cannot be changed: *Truly, you and what you worship other than God are fuel material for hell. You are the ones who go down to it.* (21:98)

The style employed here shows them as if they are now facing the ultimate reckoning, being taken to hell together with their worshipped idols. They are practically thrown in it mercilessly, as though they are small pebbles and hell is being stoned with them. At this moment, they are shown the falsity of their claims that these were deities. The proof is seen in that very scene: *If these had been gods, they would never have gone down to it. All are ones who will dwell in it forever.*(21:99) This is logical proof taken from a scene showing them, while they are still in this life, something that takes place in the hereafter. The chapter then goes on to show them actually in hell, describing their abode and conditions in it. They are in a state that deprives them of their receptive faculties: *All are ones who will dwell in it forever. There will be sobbing in it for them and they, their gods, will not hear in it.* (21:99-21:100)

Believers, on the other hand, are spared all this hardship, because they have been promised a goodly life in the hereafter: *Truly, those to whom there has preceded the fairer from Us, those are ones who are far removed from it. They will not hear even the low sound of it. And they, in that for which their souls lusted, will be ones who will dwell in it forever.* (21:101-21:102)

The phrase, 'its hissing sound', or its one word equivalent in Arabic used here, *hasisaha*, belongs to a number of Quranic terms with sounds that impart meaning. It describes the sound of the fire as it rages and burns. It is an extremely frightening sound. Hence, those given the promise of a good destiny are spared that sound, let alone suffering it. They are saved from the terror that leaves the ungrateful in a state of utter loss. Instead they enjoy whatever they desire, in complete security and bliss. They are warmly received by the angels, who give them comforting company, when the general atmosphere is one of horror: *The greater terror will not dishearten them and the angels will admit them: This is your day that you had been promised!* (21:103)

The scene is now drawn to its close, showing the ultimate state of the universe, which contributes to the great terror that overwhelms all on that day: *On a Day when We roll up the heavens like the rolling up of the written scroll of manuscripts, as We began the first creation,*

We will cause it to return. (21:104) Thus, the heavens are folded up since all matters have been settled, the reckoning is over, and the universe known to us has no further function to perform. A new world is born in a new universe: *It is a promise from Us. Truly, We had been ones who do.* (21:104)

Having drawn a strong image showing the end of the universe and all living creatures, the chapter now makes clear the divine law that determines who inherits the earth. In the end it is God's God-conscious servants who will be the masters of the earth. The two scenes are interlinked: *And, certainly, We wrote down in the Psalms after the Remembrance that the earth will be inherited by My servants—the ones who are in accord with morality.* (21:105)

As it is given in Arabic, this verse may be read in two ways. The first considers the Psalms as certain scriptures given in particular to the Prophet David. In this case, the reminder' is a reference to the Torah which was revealed earlier than the Psalms. The other reading makes of the term *zabur* a description of every revealed book, which is a portion of the original book recorded in the guarded Tablet, which in this case would be what the word 'reminder' refers to. This Tablet, thus, represents the complete version and the final authority to which all divine laws refer.
as God's God-conscious servants.

As the chapter draws to its close, its rhythm takes on a similar note to that of its opening: *Truly, in this is the delivering of this message for the folk, ones who worship. And We sent you not but as a mercy for the worlds.* (21:106-21:107) This Quran, and the laws it reveals of nature, the universe, human destiny both in this present life and in the life to come, and the rules that govern action and reward, provide a clear message. This message is appreciated by those who are ready to receive God's guidance. These are the ones who are described here as 'people who worship God.' For, a true worshipper is the one who has a soft heart, ready to receive a message, ponder over it and make use of it in his life.

Having guaranteed the right to freedom of thought and established the society that allows the human mind to think, this book also allows the human mind the freedom to determine what actions need to be taken. Thus, under the Quranic message and within its fundamental principles, we are free to develop and progress towards the highest attainable standard of human life.

Having highlighted this aspect of grace, the chapter states an order given by God to His Messenger. He is to confront those who deny the truth and ridicule his efforts. He is to identify the essence of his message as one which brings grace and mercy to all humanity:

Say: It is only revealed to me that your god is One God. Will you, then, be ones who submit to God? (21:108)

This is the most essential element of grace in the Quranic message. It is the belief in God's absolute Oneness that saves humanity from the burdens of ignorant myth, senseless idolatry and from the pressures of superstition. It establishes life on a firm basis, bonding it with universal existence, according to clear and consistent laws, leaving no room for whim or fleeting desire. It ensures that every human being is able to stand up with heads held high. Heads bow only to God, the One who holds absolute sway over all that exists.

This is the path of grace: *But if they turned away, then, say: I proclaimed to you all equally. And I am not informed whether what you are promised is near or far.* (21:109) I have given you all that I have, and now both you and I have the same knowledge. A proclamation of the sort this verse hints at is one that takes place at a time of war so as to indicate the end of peace. This chapter, however, was revealed in Makkah, before war was made permissible in the Quranic message. This means that the Prophet is commanded to declare to the ungrateful that he has given up on them, leaving them aware of their destiny, and of which he has warned them. Thus, they have no excuse. They will have to taste the bitter fruits of their actions, knowing full well what awaits them.

Your situation is completely open. If He inflicts punishment on you, He does so on the basis of His perfect knowledge of all your affairs, public and private, overt or covert. On the other hand, when He delays punishment, He does so for a definite purpose. *And I am not informed so that perhaps it will be a test for you and an enjoyment for awhile.* (21:111) I have no knowledge of what God's intention is behind this delay. He may wish to put you to a certain trial, allowing you some reprieve until a certain date He might have determined. When that time comes, He may inflict on you very severe punishment.

Having discharged his trust, delivered his message, made his declaration in all fairness and warned people against forthcoming trials, the Prophet makes an appeal to his Lord. He requests God, the Most Merciful, to judge in fairness and in truth between him and those who ridicule his message. He seeks His help against their scheming, accusations and rejection, for help may be sought only from God: *He said: My Lord! Give You judgment between us with The Truth. And our Lord is The Merciful, He Whose help is being sought against what you allege.* (21:112)

The emphasis placed here on God's abundant grace is significant. It is God, the Most Gracious and Merciful, who sent His Mes-

senger and made this an act of His mercy. But he was met with rejection and ridicule by the hardened ungrateful. It is He who can bestow His grace on His Messenger and give him support against their blasphemies.

Thus the chapter ends on a powerful note, just as it opened with a powerful statement. The beginning and ending thus provide a profound and effective address.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

What are the strengths of the believers' arguments and the weaknesses of the arguments of the ungrateful in these Quranic signs? What information are we given to interpret? Who are the intercessors: What had the ungrateful assumed: What are the consequences of their assumptions?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I looked up each Quranic verse that was an example of dialectical reasoning above and understood:

If you are in doubt, ... then
Do they say ... ? Rather
Bring forward your witnesses
Bring your proof
Have they not considered?
Let the human being consider ...
Clear proof...

LESSON 74(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY USING INFORMATION, DATA, FACTS, OBSERVATIONS

HOW TO USE INFORMATION WILL BECOME CLEAR BY ANSWERING THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

Is this a fact or an ideal?
Are things always this way, or is this statement an expression of what people are trying to achieve?
Are these ideals yours?
Why or why not?
How have people attempted to achieve this ideal?
When did they not meet the ideal? Why?
What problems did they have?
Why? How can we better achieve these ideals?

How is this supposed to work in theory? Why?
What result is it supposed to have?
Why is that considered good?
How does this really work? Why?
What incorrect assumption is made in the theory?
What reasons are there for accepting this as it is?
For trying to make it closer to the ideal?
Is the way we actually do this justified? Why or why not?
If it is not justified, how can we correct it?

Have you ever thought something was true about yourself and acted in a way that was inconsistent with your ideal self?
Did you see yourself differently then?
Did you make efforts to change your behavior?
Can anyone think of ways to be more consistent?
Why is it often hard to be honest about yourself and the groups you belong to?

QURANIC CHAPTER 23: THE BELIEVERS (AL-MUMINUN) SIGNS 23:1-23:22

Makkah: *Surely, the ones who believe prospered,* (23:1)
those, they, who in their formal prayers
are ones who are humble (23:2)
and they, those who from idle talk,
are ones who turn aside (23:3)

and they, those who the purifying alms
are ones who do give (23:4)
and they, those who of their private parts,
are ones who guard, (23:5)
but from their spouses
or from what their right hands possessed.
Truly, they are ones who are irreproachable. (23:6)
Whoever was looking for something beyond that,
then, those, they are the ones who turn away. (23:7)
And those, they who their trusts
and their compacts are ones who shepherd (23:8)
and those, they who over their formal prayers are watchful, (23:9)
those, they are ones who will inherit, (23:10)
those who will inherit Paradise,
they are ones who will dwell in it forever. (23:11)
And, certainly, We created the human being
from an extraction of clay. (23:12)
Again, We made him into seminal fluid
in a stopping place, secure. (23:13)
Again, We created a clot from seminal fluids.
Then, We created tissue from the clot.
Then, We created bones from tissue.
Then, We clothed the bones with flesh.
Again, We caused another creation to grow.
So blessed be God, the Fairer
of the ones who are creators! (23:14)
Again, truly, after that, you will die. (23:15)
Again, truly, you will be raised up
on the Day of Resurrection. (23:16)
Certainly, We created above you seven tiers.
We had not been ones who are heedless of the creation. (23:17)
We caused water to descend from heaven in measure
and We ceased it to dwell in the earth. And We certainly are
ones who have power to take away. (23:18)
And We caused to grow for you gardens of date palm trees
and grapevines where there is much sweet fruit
for you and you eat of it (23:19)
and a tree that goes forth from Mount Sinai
that bears oil and a seasoning for the ones who eat it. (23:20)
And, truly, for you in the flocks there is a lesson.
We satiate you with what is in their bellies.
In them are many profits and of them you eat (23:21)
and on them and on boats you are carried. (23:22)

COMMENTARY°

It is a true promise *Surely, the ones who believe prospered* (23:1); nay, it is a firm decision ensuring success for the believers. If we take it as a promise, we know God never fails to honor His promises; and if we say that it is His decision, then no one can ever foil a decision by God. What is promised is success in the life of this world and in the life to come; success for the individual believer and for the community of believers. A believer will feel this success in his heart and will see it coming true in his day to day life. The success God promises includes all that human beings associate with success and what God keeps in store for His faithful servants.

So, who are those faithful servants, the believers who receive this document written by God, containing this promise and a clear declaration of success? Who are the believers promised all goodness, victory, happiness, success and goodly provisions in this life on earth; and further promised to be successful in the hereafter, when they receive God's reward and enjoy His pleasure? They will also have much more that is known only to God, and this will be given in their two lives. Who are these believers who will inherit paradise where they will abide?

23:2-23:9 give us a detailed list of their characteristics. (23:2-23:9) So, what do we make of these characteristics? They feel the reverence associated with formal prayer, *those, they, who in their formal prayers are ones who are humble* (23:2) as they stand up to address God, and their hearts are thus filled with awe, which is, in turn, reflected in their features and movements. Their spirits feel God's majesty as they realize that they stand in His presence. Thus, all their preoccupations and distractions disappear. Their thoughts and feelings are all concentrated on their discourse with Him. In His sublime presence, they are heedless of all their surroundings. They see and feel nothing but His majesty. Their minds and hearts are purged of even the slightest alien thought or feeling. In such a situation, a stray atom is reunited with its source, a wandering spirit finds its way, and a heart that has been long in isolation finds its company. Thus, all values, concerns and considerations diminish, except for the ones that are related to God in some way.

This: *and they, those who from idle talk, are ones who turn aside* (23:3) includes all frivolity, in words, actions, or concerns. A believer's heart has its own preoccupations which steer it away from frivolity. It is full with the remembrance of God and with reflection on His majesty and His signs that we see everywhere in the universe and within ourselves. Indeed, every scene in the universe fills our minds with wonder and gives a clear message to our hearts. More-

over, the duties required by faith keep a believer preoccupied with maintaining the purity of his or her heart, soul and conscience. Believers' duties include those of behavior which aim at maintaining the very high standards required by faith. Moreover, the task of enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong aims at preventing any deviation in the life of the Muslim community. Jihad is also a duty that aims to repel aggression, protect the Muslim community and maintain its position and sovereignty. These duties are always there, and believers do not shirk their responsibilities. These are either individual or collective duties, sufficient to preoccupy people throughout their lives. Man's energy is limited, and it may either be spent in what serves and improves human life, or in frivolity and idle pursuit. By his faith, a believer is required to spend all his energy in what promotes life and sets it on the course of success and prosperity.

This does not preclude relaxation and seeking comfort when it is needed. But this is totally different from indulging in frivolous and idle pursuits.

Having come forward to declare their submission to God and demonstrate this in their formal prayer, and having turned away from all that is frivolous, true believers complement this by being active in charity. *And they, those who the purifying alms are ones who do give.* (23:4) The term used in Arabic for charity is zakat, but this word is often used in a wider sense that goes far beyond the obligatory financial worship with which it is normally associated. Such charity purifies man's heart and money. It purges hearts of selfishness and greed, and overcomes Satan's whispers of discouragement as he raises before us the spectre of poverty, and demonstrates our trust in God. It also makes our money, or what is left of it, pure and good, free of all obligations and doubts concerning its being lawful. Furthermore, charity protects the Muslim community against the imbalance that results from the extremes of poverty on the one side and affluence on the other. It provides social security for all individuals in the Muslim community, particularly the weaker elements, and it protects the community against disintegration.

This is a pointer to the purity of the human soul, the home and the community, and to the way of protecting oneself, family and society. *And they, those who of their private parts, are ones who guard.* (23:5) It is all the result of refraining from indulgence in sin and turning people's hearts only to what is permissible. Thus, the Muslim community is protected from the unrestrained promiscuity that undermines the family and allows dubious parenthood to increase and become acceptable.

The Quran defines here the clean and healthy way which allows a man to place the seeds of life in the right place: *And they, those who of their private parts, are ones who guard, but from their spouses or from what their right hands possessed. Truly, they are ones who are irreproachable.* (23:5-23:6) As for married couples, no argument is raised here, because marriage is respected in all human communities. The other form, referring to 'rightfully possessed' women, needs some explanation.

We have spoken about the question of slavery and the Quranic approach to it elsewhere. As we have stated, when the Quranic message was revealed, slavery was a universal system. Captives of war were made slaves, and this was an international institution. It was not possible for the Quranic message at the time, when it was engaged in military battles against its enemies who were trying hard to stop its spread with military force, to abolish slavery unilaterally. This would have meant that Muslim captives would remain enslaved by the enemies of the Quranic message, while the Quranic message would set enemy captives free. Hence, while putting an end to all other sources of slavery, the Quranic message made a provisional exception in the case of captives of war. Abolition of this remaining source was delayed until a new international system to regulate the question of war captives could be put in place.

With this source of slavery remaining, captive women continued to come into Quranic society. To give them equal treatment, on the basis of the system then operating throughout the world, meant that they should be slaves. Their enslavement did not allow them to become wives through normal marriage. Hence, the Quranic message allowed intercourse with them by their masters only, unless they were freed through the many ways the Quranic message provided for the same.

We see also in this permission a way to satisfy the natural needs of the women slaves themselves, so that they did not resort to immorality. We see this happening today, despite the international treaties prohibiting slavery, when women are taken captive in war. The Quranic message, however, does not condone such promiscuity. But the Quranic message did open up several ways for women slaves to gain their freedom: one of which automatically came into operation when the slave woman gave birth to her master's child. In this case, she became free on her master's death. Alternatively, her master may give her freedom, either voluntarily or in atonement for some offense he might have committed. Or, she may choose to buy her own freedom. A different situation applied if her master hit her across the face. He was, then, required to free her by way of compensation.

There were further ways to freedom as well.

Anyway, allowing slavery through war was a temporary necessity in order to maintain equal treatment in a world where all war captives became slaves. It was, however, not a part of the Quranic social system per se.

The limit is that of wives and women rightly possessed. *Whoever was looking for something beyond that, then, those, they are the ones who turn away.* (23:7) There can be no other legitimate way. Whoever tries to go beyond this limit actually breaks the boundaries of permissibility and falls in sin. He becomes an assailant of human honor. There can be no lawful relationship except through marriage or the results of war undertaken for the sake of the Quranic message. When transgression beyond these well defined limits takes place, the individual concerned becomes corrupt, like a sheep grazing out of bounds, and the family is undermined because of the lack of security felt by its members. Indeed the whole community feels endangered because its wolves have been set loose. The Quranic message is keen to avoid all that.

They, individuals and community alike, honor their pledges and discharge their trust.*And those, they who their trusts and their compacts are ones who shepherd.* (23:8) Both the individual and the community have many types of trust to maintain, the first of which is the trust encapsulated in their own nature, i.e. they are created by God in an upright fashion so as to be in harmony with the rest of the universe to which they belong. This testifies to God's Oneness by the natural feeling of unity that governs the universe. Believers are faithful to this great trust, and they protect their nature from deviation so that it continues to testify to God's Oneness. Other trusts are derived from this basic element.

The first pledge is that God has taken from, and made ingrained in human nature, committing it to believe in His existence and His Oneness. All other pledges, covenants and treaties derive from this first one. When a believer commits himself to something, he makes God his witness. Honoring his commitments is, to a believer, part of being God-fearing, of taqwa.

The Muslim community is also responsible for honoring its public trust, and for the fulfilment of its pledges to God and the duties that result from these pledges. The chapter gives its statement in very general terms so as to include every type of trust and pledge. Believers are faithful to all these, at all times. Being faithful is part of their character. No community can hope to have a straightforward life unless pledges and trusts are fulfilled, so that every individual and group are certain of this basic rule of community life. It is the rule

that gives everyone a sense of trust and security.

They do not neglect their formal prayers or miss them through laziness. *And those, they who over their formal prayers are watchful.* (23:9) Nor do they fail to attend to them as prayer should be attended to. They offer them on time, attending to obligatory and recommended parts, making them complete, omitting nothing essential. Their prayer is alive, filling their hearts and interacting with their consciences. Formal prayer maintains a bond between God and human hearts. Therefore, a person who does not attend regularly to his prayer is unlikely to attend diligently and conscientiously to his bonds with other people. The qualities of believers outlined in this chapter start with prayer and finish with prayer, so as to stress its unrivalled importance in the structure of faith. After all, formal prayer is the most perfect form of worship addressed to God.

These characteristics delineate the character of believers who are certain to be successful. While they are characteristics of individuals, they are decisive in giving the Muslim community its collective character and shaping the type of life it lives. It is an honorable life that befits man, the creature God has honored and allowed to move up on the way to perfection. It is clear that God does not want us to live like animals, merely eating and indulging in pleasure.

Since life on earth does not achieve the perfection God wants for humanity, He has willed that believers who follow His way should attain their goal in paradise, where they live forever, in complete security, and where they have no fear: *Those, they are ones who will inherit, those who will inherit Paradise, they are ones who will dwell in it forever.* (23:10-23:11) This is the ultimate success God has determined for believers. There is no goal beyond this.

Having given a detailed account of the qualities and characteristics of believers, the chapter moves on to point out the indications available within we ourselves that lead to faith. It speaks of the various stages of development of a human being, starting with the very beginning of human origin, and ending with resurrection on the Day of Judgment, to establish a firm link between this life and the life to come: (23:12-23:16)

The gradual formation of the human being, following the same sequence, confirms first the truth of the Originator, and also the deliberate planning in the course such formation follows. This cannot be the result of blind coincidence. Nor can it be a random beginning leading to a consistent line that never fails or deviates. The truth is that human beings come into existence in the way they do, rather than any other possible way, because our Creator wants it this way,

and He does things according to His own plan and design.

Moreover, by giving this full picture with the different stages shown to follow each other without fail also indicates that belief in the Creator who plans everything and following the course of action believers follow, as indicated in the first eleven verses of the chapter, is the only way to achieve the perfect standard human beings can achieve both in this life and in the hereafter. Thus, the two opening passages of the chapter are interlinked.

This statement: *And, certainly, We created the human being from an extraction of clay.* (23:12) implies that there are stages in the creation of human beings, without specifying them. The implication is much clearer in the Arabic' original where the term *sulalah*, given in English as 'essence', also connotes a chain of development. Hence, it means that we go through different stages, one leading to the other, from the very first beginning of clay to the eventual creation, man. This is a truth we get to know from the Quran. We do not need any confirmation of it from scientific theories concerned with the origins of the human being or other living things.

The Quran establishes this truth of God's work and design. Thus, we can contemplate the great divide between the clay and the human being who came from that clay through a succession of stages. The details of this succession are not mentioned because it is unimportant to the wider aims of the Quran. Scientific theories try to find a definite ladder for our origins and evolution. In their attempts, these theories may come up with some true conclusions and they may make mistakes. We cannot, however, confuse the truth established in the Quran, which mentions the succession of stages, with the attempts made by scientists to establish these different stages of succession. These attempts are always open to error, proving today what they may disprove tomorrow in the light of advanced techniques and technologies.

This truth is sometimes expressed very briefly in the Quran, when it says that human creation began with clay, giving no reference to the stages which the process of creation then went through. The ultimate reference then is the most detailed Quranic text, which refers to a 'succession of stages'. We should remember that the Quran uses a more general or shorter text, only because it is more suited to the context in which it occurs.

The Quran does not explain how the human being evolved from the essence of clay, because such explanation is not part of its objectives. The stages of this succession may be exactly as scientific theories suggest, or they may be different. It may happen that we will be able to formulate an accurate idea of such succession. However,

the parting point between the Quranic view of us and the way scientific theories look at him is that the Quran honors us, stating that a measure of God's spirit was breathed into us to make of us a person with the qualities and characteristics that distinguish us from animals. In this, the Quranic view is fundamentally different from that of all materialist theories. God certainly tells the truth.

This applies to the origin of the human race: it starts from an essence of clay. As for individual human beings, they go through well known stages:*Again, We made him into seminal fluid in a stopping place, secure.* (23:13) The creation formula that brings about new individuals of the human race, and their method of reproduction, follows a line set by God. A drop of fluid is discharged from the man to settle in the woman's uterus. It is not the whole drop; rather, a single cell out of hundreds of thousands forming this drop. It settles in this safe enclosure in the uterus which is supported by the hip bones, protecting it from the shocks and knocks that occur to the body as one moves about.

The Quranic text makes the gamete a stage in the succession of human creation, coming immediately after man's existence. This is true, but it also deserves contemplation. A human being in his full stature, and with all his features, elements and characteristics, is enclosed within this gamete. It then develops into an embryo when it begins its new existence through a new series of stages.

We are overwhelmed with amazement here at this fact in the development of the embryo which is stated in the Quran long before it was confirmed by embryology. This is the fact that bones are made of cells that are totally different from those of flesh. It has been confirmed beyond any shadow of doubt that bones are formed first in the embryo. In fact, not a single cell of flesh could be seen before the whole skeleton of the embryo is finally in place. This is what the Quran states: *Again, We created a clot from seminal fluids. Then, We created tissue from the clot. Then, We created bones from tissue. Then, We clothed the bones with flesh. Again, We caused another creation to grow. So blessed be God, the Fairer of the ones who are creators!* (23:14)

This is now the human being with his distinctive features. It is true that the human embryo is similar to animal embryos, but only in its physical stages. For then the human embryo is given a different sort of creation to make up this distinguished creature that we know, with his potential to achieve excellence. The animal embryo, on the other hand, remains within the animal grade, possessing nothing of the distinctive features and qualities of the human being.

God is certainly the only One who creates. The superlative form

is not used here in a comparative sense; rather, it indicates perfection in God's creation. *So blessed be God, the Fairer of the ones who are creators!* (23:14) It is He who has given human nature the ability to move from one stage to the next, in accordance with the law He has set, which will never change or be modified. It will not fail to continue until we achieve the degree of perfection assigned to us on the basis of a perfect order.

The theory of evolution seeks to prove the opposite, making the human being another stage of animal evolution, and giving animals the capability to attain human status. The facts we see disprove the existence of any such relation between the human being and animal, showing that no animal has the necessary qualities to evolve into human status. It will always remain within animal boundaries. Its animal evolution may have been attempted to be proven according to Darwin's theory or in some other way, but humanity remains a higher type of creation distinguished by certain qualities that make the human being what he is, and this could never have come about as a result of mechanical development. It is a gift from a higher power.

The chapter continues to depict the different stages of life to complete the journey. Human life that began on earth does not however end there, because an element from outside the earth forms an essential part of it, influencing the path it travels. The breathing of God's spirit in it has given human life a goal different from that of the body, and a destination unlike that of the destination of flesh and blood. Hence it achieves its completeness somewhere other than this earth, in a totally different world: *Again, truly, after that, you will die. Again, truly, you will be raised up on the Day of Resurrection.* (23:15-23:16)

Thus, death is the end of human life on earth, forming a bridge between the life we know and the life to come. As such, it is a stage in human life, not its end.

Then comes resurrection which heralds the last stage, when the perfect life begins, free of all the failings of earthly life, physical needs, fear and worry, and leading to no other stage because it represents the level of perfection human beings can attain. This, however, applies only to those who follow the way leading to such perfection, outlined in the opening verses of this chapter. It is the way followed by believers. By contrast, those who in this life sink to the level of animals go further down in the life to come so that they are right at the bottom. They are no longer human beings, because they become part of the fuel of hell, fed by stones and men.

The chapter moves on to point out well known, yet often forgotten, aspects in the universe which should lead people to faith: (23:17-23:22)

All these indicators are cited here as aspects of God's power and perfect planning. In their constitutions, functions and roles they move in perfect harmony and in the same direction. They are subject to the same law. They function in unison and serve man, the creature God has honored. Therefore, these aspects of the universe are shown to be interlinked with the stages of human life as outlined in the chapter.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions,** (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QUESTIONS

How can we know whether or not this is true?
What would it be like for this claim to be true? False?
Do we clearly understand the difference?
What evidence would count for it? Against it?
Are any Quranic concepts (words or phrases) unclear?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confi dent you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not devel oped any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

Raise basic issues.
Explore beneath the surface of things.
Follow-up problematic areas of thought.
Discover the structure of their own thought.
Develop sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
Arrive at judgment through their own reasoning.
Note claims, evidence, conclusions, questions-at-issue, assumptions, implications, consequences, concepts, interpretations, and the Quranic point of view.

QURANIC CHAPTER 23: THE BELIEVERS (AL-MUMINUN)

SIGNS 23:23-23:32

Makkah: Book 25: Noah (23:23)

Makkah: Book 25: Noah (23:24)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (23:25)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (23:26)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (23:27)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (23:28)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (23:29)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (23:30)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (23:31)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (23:32)

QURANIC CHAPTER 23: THE BELIEVERS (AL-MUMINUN)
SIGNS 23:33-23:50

Makkah: Book 25: Noah (23:33)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (23:34)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (23:35)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (23:36)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (23:37)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (23:38)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (23:39)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (23:40)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (23:41)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (23:42)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (23:43)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (23:44)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Aaron (23:45)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Aaron (23:46)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Aaron (23:47)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses and Aaron (23:47)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (23:48)
Makkah: Book 28: Jesus son of Mary (23:50)

LESSON 74(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY

EXPERIENCES, REASONED JUDGMENTS

Any questions you ask require information. There are three aspects to this:

1. What are the questions I am being asked either explicitly or implicitly?
2. Does my thinking have a purpose?
3. How am I using the information?

If you have information, information never uses itself. Information never gives itself meaning. It deduces implications from itself. Information must be treated by the mind. It must be interpreted. Information must be given a meaning. As Quranic critical thinkers you must make certain to distinguish hard data from the inferences or conclusions that are drawn from them.

QURANIC CHAPTER 23: THE BELIEVERS (AL-MUMINUN) SIGNS 23:51-23:77

Makkah: *O you Messengers!*
Eat of what is good
and do as one in accord with morality.
Truly, I am Knowing of what you do. (23:51)
And, truly, this, your community is one community
and I am your Lord so be God-conscious. (23:52)
Then, they cut their affair of unity asunder into sects among them,
each party glad with what was with them. (23:53)
So forsake you them for awhile in their obstinacy. (23:54)
Assume they that with the relief
We furnish them of wealth and children (23:55)
We compete for good deeds for them?
Nay! They are not aware. (23:56)
Truly, those, they are dreading their Lord,
ones who are apprehensive. (23:57)
And those, they who believe in the signs of their Lord (23:58)
and those, they who ascribe nothing
as partners with their Lord, (23:59)
and those who give what they gave with their hearts afraid
because they are ones who will return to their Lord, (23:60)
are those who compete with one another
in good deeds and they, in them,
are ones who take the lead. (23:61)
And We place not a burden on any soul but to its capacity.

And from Us is a Book that speaks The Truth for itself.
And they will not be wronged. (23:62)
Nay! Their hearts are in obstinacy towards this Quran
and they have other actions besides
as they are ones who act (23:63)
until, when We took ones who are given ease
with the punishment.
That is when they make entreaties. (23:64)
Make not entreaties this Day.
Truly, you will not be helped from Us. (23:65)
Surely, My signs had been recounted to you,
but you had been receding on your heels (23:66)
as ones who grow arrogant regarding it
and ones who nightly talk nonsense, talking foolishly. (23:67)
Meditate they not on the saying or drew not near them anything
that approaches not their fathers, the ancient ones? (23:68)
Or is it they recognize not their Messenger
so that they are ones who reject him? (23:69)
Or say they: There is madness in him?
Nay! He drew near them with The Truth,
but most of them are ones who dislike The Truth. (23:70)
And if The Truth followed their desires, the heavens and the earth
would have gone to ruin and whoever is in it.
Nay! We brought them their Remembrance, but they, from their
Remembrance, are ones who turn aside. (23:71)
*Or is it that **you** ask them for payment?*
*Yet the revenue from **your** Lord is better.*
And He is Best of the ones who provide. (23:72)
*And, truly, **you** call them to a straight path.* (23:73)
And, truly, those who believe not in the world to come
are ones who move away from the path. (23:74)
And even if We had mercy on them and removed the harm
which is on them, they would still be resolute in their defiance,
wandering unwilling to see. (23:75)
And, certainly, We took them with the punishment.
Then, they gave not into their Lord nor lower themselves (23:76)
until, when we opened a door for them of a severe punishment.
That is when they were ones who are seized with despair! (23:77)

COMMENTARY°

At this point in its quick references to earlier Messengers the chapter makes its address to the followers of all messengers, as

though they were all gathered together. Thus, the separating gulfs of time and place are shown to be meaningless when compared to the true bond of faith that unites them all: (23:51-23:52)

This address to His Messengers requires them to live as human beings, which is the very thing that those who opposed them questioned: Eating is a human need, but choosing only what is wholesome is the aspect that elevates human beings and makes them grow in purity. It enables them to establish a bond with the society.

They are also required to do good deeds. While taking action is common to all human beings, insisting on doing good is the characteristic of goodly people, providing a measure of control and a clear goal for their deeds. Again such people look up to the Supreme Society when they embark on anything.

No Messenger of God was ever required to abandon his humanity. Rather, what they were asked to do was to elevate this humanity to the highest standard God has made possible for human beings to achieve. Thus, the Prophets provided the role model and the ideal which other people should try to emulate. It is left to God to judge their actions according to His own fine measure: *O you Messengers! Eat of what is good and do as one in accord with morality. Truly, I am Knowing of what you do.* (23:51)

Emphasis is placed on the fact that neither time nor place is of any significance when compared with the single truth that all Messengers preached. They all shared a very distinctive nature, were given their messages by the One Creator of all, and worked towards the same goal: *And, truly, this, your community is one community and I am your Lord so be God-conscious.* (23:52)

This third passage begins by showing the state humanity reached after the generations which witnessed God's Messengers. This is the state God's last Messenger found them in. They were in dispute over the single truth preached by all God's messengers.

The chapter shows people oblivious of the truth the final Messenger put before their eyes. In their ignorance, they were totally unaware of the consequences they were bound to face. By contrast, believers worship God alone, do good deeds and remain apprehensive of what lies before them. They are in awe over the fact that they will inevitably be returned to God. The two situations are in perfect contrast: a believer is alert, cautious and heeding the warnings, while an unbeliever is deep in ignorance, unaware of what lies ahead.

The passage addresses them in different ways, at times denouncing their attitude, and at others discussing their doubts and providing clear answers to them. The passage also addresses their finer nature, pointing out what encourages people to believe, whether it be within

themselves or in the universe at large. It also picks up some of what they take for granted, using these as argument against them.

As the passage concludes, it leaves them to their inevitable destiny. It tells the Prophet Muhammad that he should continue his efforts, explaining his message. He should not be distressed at their obstinate rejection. He should repel their evil deeds with good ones, and seek refuge with God against Satan who tries hard to lead humanity along the path of error. (23:53-23:56)

All Messengers belonged to a single nation, preaching the same message, worship and pursuing the same direction. But when the Messengers had gone, humanity splintered into different groups which could not agree on what line to follow.

The Quran portrays such divergence as people in conflict, splitting into factions, quarreling and pulling apart from each other. The picture drawn here is full of effort and movement. In the end each faction is left with only a portion of the whole, delighting at their ability to hold on to this. Hence, no faction thinks of anything other than what it supposedly possesses. Each goes its separate way, shutting up all inlets so that no ray of light or fresh breath of air comes through. All live in their isolated quarters, busy with what they have, ignorant of everything else.

Once this image has been drawn, the chapter addresses God's Messenger: *So forsake you them for awhile in their obstinacy.* (23:54) Let them take their time, preoccupied with their own affairs, until their appointed time inevitably comes, spelling out their destiny.

The section adds a derisive question that highlights their lack of awareness. They think that the time they have been given, and the wealth and offspring they are allowed to enjoy means that they are favored with blessings. (23:55-23:56) Little do they realize the truth that it is all but a test which they have to go through: *We compete for good deeds for them? Nay! They are not aware.* (23:56) They simply do not perceive the destiny to which they are heading after having enjoyed what has been given in this life.

By contrast, the believers are always on the alert, taking necessary precautions: (23:57-23:61)

Here we see how faith affects hearts, imparting to them a special kind of refinement, sensitivity and aspiration to attain perfection. They are the ones who consider the consequences of their actions. They are always ready and willing to do their duties.

We see that believers are always in awe of their Lord, God-conscious, believing in His revelations and His signs, attributing no share of God to anyone other than Him, fulfilling the duties He requires of

them. Beyond all this, they 'give away whatever they have to give with their hearts filled with awe, knowing that to their Lord they shall certainly return.' This is a manifestation of their feeling that they actually fall short of what they should do. It is true that they have done their utmost, but they consider it far from adequate.

A believer senses God's care and feels His favors with his every and heartbeat. Hence, he thinks that whatever he offers of and good action is too little by comparison. At the same time, every grain in a believer feels God's greatness and power. With all his faculties he perceives how God regulates everything around him. Hence, he stands in awe of Him. He dreads meeting God, for fear of having fallen short of fulfilling his duties towards Him, or not having given Him what is due to Him of worship and gratitude.

It is these people who vie with one another in doing what is good. They are the ones who hasten to do good deeds, and are in the lead among those who do good. Their watchful eyes, alert hearts and minds prompt them to do what is required of them. Theirs is a totally different situation from the others who are lost in ignorance, thinking that God's blessings are given to them because they are favored. They are no better than game animals rushing towards bait. Such people are everywhere: they are overwhelmed with what they are given of life's comforts, distracted from their duties, full of their own importance. But then they only wake up to their fate when it is too late.

The Quranic message ensures that its followers' hearts are always alert. This is an alertness generated by faith right from the moment it settles in a person's heart. It neither defies human power, nor is too hard for us to sustain. It is a question of sensitivity enhanced by a believer's bond with God and his watchfulness in all situations, guarding against sin. It is perfectly within people's power when the light of faith shines in their hearts: *And We place not a burden on any soul but to its capacity. And from Us is a Book that speaks The Truth for itself. And they will not be wronged.* (23:62)

God has established people's duties as He knows their inclinations and abilities. He will hold them to account on the basis of what they do within their ability. He neither charges them with what they cannot bear, nor dismisses any little thing they do. All their deeds are documented in a 'record that speaks the truth,' highlighting it in its full value. Needless to say, God is precise in His reckoning.

People, however, tend to overlook the truth because their hearts are not touched by its invigorating light. Hence, they remain preoccupied with petty concerns, lost in a perpetual maze. They are only awakened when faced with inevitable doom, looking at the suffering that awaits them and enduring a humiliatingly and strong reproach: (23:63-23:67)

Thus, the reason for their headlong pursuit of worldly affairs is nothing like being burdened with what they cannot bear. It is simply that their hearts are blinded, unable to see the truth as clearly stated in the Quran. They are wont to follow a line different from the course charted by the Quran: *Nay! Their hearts are in obstinacy towards this Quran and they have other actions besides as they are ones who act.* (23:63)

The chapter then paints a picture of their being awakened by a sudden calamity: *Until, when We took ones who are given ease with the punishment. That is when they make entreaties.* (23:64) People who live in luxury are indeed the ones who are most preoccupied with life's comforts, totally oblivious to what lies ahead. Now they find themselves suddenly overtaken by suffering, and they cry out for mercy, making a passionate appeal for it to be lifted. It is a picture that contrasts with the life of luxury and arrogance they lead in this world. Hence, they receive a strong reproach: *Make not entreaties this Day. Truly, you will not be helped from Us.* (23:65) The scene is described as though it is taking place now. They are strongly reproached, made certain of having no support, and reminded of what they used to do in life: *Surely, My signs had been recounted to you, but you had been receding on your heels* 23:66 as ones who grow arrogant regarding it and ones who nightly talk nonsense, talking foolishly.* (23:66-23:67) It is as though what was being recited was a danger or a calamity you needed to avoid. You were too proud to submit to the truth. Indeed, you compounded your insolence, adding insult to injury, speaking ill of the Prophet and his message, but you, nevertheless, are willing to spend hours in idle chit-chat.

It was common practice for them to use obscene language when they gathered in circles around the Kabah, close to the idols they worshipped. Now the Quran paints for them a scene of when they are called to account for their indulgence, showing them raising their voices with cries for help. It is at this point that they are reminded of what they do now in their circles, as though both take place at the same time. This is a familiar method of the Quran, frequently depicting the Day of Judgment as though it were actually occurring at that precise moment.

In their hostility towards the Prophet and with their disparaging remarks about him and the Quran in their gatherings, the ungrateful represent an ignorant arrogance that is blinded to the truth. With such blind ignorance, the truth becomes the subject of derision and ridicule. Such people are encountered no matter what the time or place. Yet the state of ignorance that prevailed in Arabia at the time when the Quranic message was revealed serves as an example of

similar past and future situations where ignorance prevails.

Having shown the ungrateful this scene of reproach in the hereafter, the chapter takes them back to this world, questioning them about their attitude: what stops them from accepting what they are told by God's Messenger, whom they know to be a person of trust? What doubts do they have to prevent them from following divine guidance? Why do they turn away from it, ridiculing it when it represents the absolute truth? (23:68-23:74)

The message Muhammad, God's Messenger, preached could not be rejected by anyone who looks at it carefully, using his reason. It is a model of beauty, perfection, consistency and attraction. It fits with human nature, addresses people's minds and hearts, outlines a course to elevate human life, and lays down a fine constitution to follow and a perfect code of justice. It also includes what answers the needs of human nature and what helps its development and advancement. *Meditate they not on the saying or drew not near them anything that approaches not their fathers, the ancient ones?* (23:68) This is, then, the secret behind their attitude.

If so, it would have been strange for them and for their forefathers that a Messenger came to call on them to believe in God's Oneness. But the history of divine messages proves that Messengers followed one another, and all of them preached the same message advocated by Muhammad, God's last Messenger.

Could this have been the reason for their insolent rejection? Ye they knew their Messenger well. They knew his birth and ancestr *Or is it they recognize not their Messenger so that they are ones wh reject him?* (23:69) They also knew his character, honesty and integrity. Long before he received his message, they nicknamed him al-amin, which means 'the trustworthy'.

Some of the lowest in their ranks used to say this about him, knowing full well that he was the wisest and most reasonable person among them. They never knew him slip once. (23:70)

None of such possibilities had any foundation whatsoever. The fact is that most of them hated the truth because it deprived them of their false values and contradicted their desires and preferences: *Or say they: There is madness in him? Nay! He drew near them with The Truth, but most of them are ones who dislike The Truth.* (23:70)

The truth cannot be subservient to personal desires and preferences. For it is on the basis of truth that the universe is sustained, life flourishes and the laws of nature function: *And if The Truth followed their desires, the heavens and the earth would have gone to ruin and whoever is in it. Nay! We brought them their Remembrance, but they, from their Remembrance, are ones who turn aside.* (23:71)

Bearing this in mind, the Quranic message considers legislation for human life to be part of the universal law, formulated by the same hand that conducts the affairs of the universe and establishes coherence between all its parts. Human beings are part of the universe and subject to its law. Hence, it is only fitting that the One who legislates for the entire universe should also legislate for human life. When this is done, human life is no longer subjected to personal desires and preferences. Thus, it is immune to corruption: *And if The Truth followed their desires, the heavens and the earth would have gone to ruin and whoever is in it.* (23:71)

The community addressed by the Quranic message should be keen to follow its truth, not only because it is the truth, but also because it represents its glory. Without the Quranic message, it would have had no place in history: *Nay! We brought them their Remembrance, but they, from their Remembrance, are ones who turn aside.* (23:71) The Arabs were ignored throughout history until they were given the Quranic message. Since then, this community continued to be glorious as long as it adhered to the Quranic message. Its position on the world stage, however, gradually shrank when it abandoned the Quranic message, until it reached its present low depth. It will not recover its glory until it reverts to its true, guiding light.

The chapter resumes its questioning of their attitude and the doubts that may be the cause for their refusal to believe in the Messenger: *Or is it that you have asked them for payment? Yet the revenue from your Lord is better.* (23:72) Had you demanded any wages from them, such a request might be their cause for refusal. The fact is that you seek nothing from them: *And He is Best of the ones who provide* .(23:72) What could a prophet seek from human beings, poor and needy as they are, when he has access to God's inexhaustible favors? Indeed, what would a Prophet's followers hope to gain of this world's comforts when they seek what may be provided by God who grants everything people have? The fact is that when a human heart is in touch with God, this whole universe, with all that it contains, dwindles into insignificance.

Yet, like everyone else who does not believe in the life to come, these people deviate from the perfect way: *And, truly, those who believe not in the world to come are ones who move away from the path.* (23:74) Had they been well guided, they would have reflected on the stages of their existence, because such reflection is bound to lead to belief in the hereafter, when perfection and absolute justice are attainable. The life to come is merely a stage in the line God has charted for all existence.

These ungrateful are people who have lost their way and no

longer benefit from the tests to which they are exposed, be they tests of plenty and affluence or those of hardship. Hence, when they are tested with favor: *Assume they that with the relief We furnish them of wealth and children We compete for good deeds for them? Nay! They are not aware.* (23:55-23:56) Even if they are tested with difficulty and hardship, their hearts are not softened, nor are their consciences awakened. They do not turn back to God, appealing to Him to remove their hardship. They remain in such a condition until, on the Day of Judgment, they are visited with an even greater suffering. Then they will be truly desperate and bewildered. (23:75-23:77)

These are common features among such people. They are hard hearted, oblivious of their duties to God, and they deny the hereafter. The idolaters who opposed the Prophet when he delivered his message were of the same type.

Showing humility at a time of hardship, and turning to God, entreating Him and recognizing Him as the only refuge and resort are indicative of a change of heart and a returning to faith. A heart which establishes such links with God is bound to soften. Reflection and remembrance then provide protection against further slips and errors. Thus, hardship brings about real benefit. But the person who persists in arrogance is a lost case, without hope. He is left to his destiny when he will be overwhelmed with suffering in the life to come. He will then plunge into despair, finding neither refuge nor support.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

How would your rate yourself? Answer the following questions::

How can we know whether or not this is true?
What would it be like for this claim to be true? False?
Do we clearly understand the difference?
What evidence would count for it? Against it?
Are any Quranic concepts (words or phrases) unclear?

LESSON 74(3). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION: CLARIFYING VALUES AND STANDARDS

HOW IS DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING BY CLARIFYING VALUES AND STANDARDS USED IN THE QURAN?

CRITERIA INCLUDE

Clear evidence: *Surely, clear evidence drew near you from your Lord. So whoever perceived, it will be for his own soul. Whoever was in darkness will be against his own soul. Say: And I am not a guardian over you.* **(6:104)**

Meditation, pondering, considering: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* **(38:29)**

Recollection: *And his folk argued with him. He said: You argue with me about God while, surely, He guided me? I fear not whatever partners you ascribe with Him. When my Lord wills a thing, my Lord encompassed everything in His knowledge. Will you not, then, recollect?* **(6:80)**

Reflection: *And among His signs are that He created for you spouses from among yourselves, that you rest in them. And He made affection and mercy among you. Truly, in that are certainly signs for a folk who reflect.* **(30:21)**

Taking to heart: *And whomever God wants, He guides him. He expands his breast for The Submission to One God. And whomever He wants to cause to go astray, He makes his breast tight, troubling, as if he had been climbing up a difficult ascent. Thus, God assigns disgrace on those who believe not. And this is the path of your Lord, one that is straight. Surely, We explained distinctly the signs for a folk who recollect.* **(6:125-6:126)**

Convincing proof from reliable and certain premises: *Say: Prepare your proof. This is a Remembrance for him who is with me and a Remembrance of him before me. Nay! Most of them know not The Truth, so they are ones who turn aside.* **(21:24)**

Bringing your proof, showing your evidence: *Is not He better Who begins creation, again, will cause it to return and Who provides you from the heaven and the earth. Is there a god besides God? Say: Prepare your proof if you had been ones who are sincere!* **(27:64)**

People of intellect and reflection: *It is He Who caused water to descend from heaven for you to drink from it and from it, trees wherein you pasture your herds. He caused crops to develop for you with it, and the olives and the date palms and the grapevines, and all kinds of fruits. Truly, in that is a sign for a folk who reflect.* **(16:10-16:11)**

Explaining distinctly: *And it is He Who made the stars for you so that*

you will be truly guided by them in the shadows of dry land and the sea. Surely, We explained distinctly the signs for a folk who know. **(6:97-6:98)**

Being reasonable: *And He caused to be subservient to you the nighttime and the daytime and the sun and the moon, and the stars, ones caused to be subservient by His command. Truly, in that are signs for a folk who are reasonable.* **(16:12)**

Being just and fair: *O those who believed! Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God and let not that you detest a folk drive you into not dealing justly. Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness. And be God-conscious of God. Truly, God is Aware of what you do.* (5:8)

Critical thinkers understand the difference between indicating a preference for something and evaluating something. They are aware of the process and the necessary criteria in order to provide a thoughtful and fair-minded evaluation. They make use of explicit criteria.

They base their judgments on values that they have clarified and understood. When discussing the criteria of the Quranic message, critical Quranic thinkers first both understand the issue in question and the purpose of the evaluation and what function the issue being evaluated is to serve. They do this by taking into consideration various points of view in their evaluation.

The Quranic message understands the important relationship of evidence to belief and so often may qualify its statements accordingly. The tentativeness of many of its signs is characterized by the appropriate use of such qualifiers as: highly likely, probably, not very likely, highly unlikely, often, usually, seldom, I doubt, I suspect, most, many, and some. Critical thinkers are not only clear, but also exact or precise.

What information does the Quran give in this sign?
What information do I need to answer my question?

Then, believe you in some of the Book, and are ungrateful for some? (2:85)

QURANIC CHAPTER 23: THE BELIEVERS (AL-MUMINUN) SIGNS 23:78-23:92

Makkah: *And He it is Who caused you to grow,*
have the ability to hear and sight and mind.
But you give little thanks! (23:78)
It is He Who made you numerous on the earth
and to Him you will be assembled. (23:79)
And it is He Who gives life and causes to die
and His is the alteration of nighttime and daytime.

Will you not, then, be reasonable? (23:80)
Nay! They said the like of what the ancient ones said. (23:81)
They said: When we are dead and had been earth dust and bones,
will we be ones who are raised up? (23:82)
Certainly, we were promised this
—we and our fathers—before this.
This is nothing but the fables of the ancient ones. (23:83)
Say: To whom belongs the earth and whoever is in it
if you had been knowing? (23:84)
They will say: To God!
Say: Then, will you not recollect? (23:85)
Say: Who is the Lord of the seven heavens
and Lord of the Sublime Throne? (23:86)
They will say: It belongs to God!
Say: Then, will you not be God-conscious? (23:87)
Say: In whose hand is the kingdom of everything
and He grants protection?
No one is granted protection against Him
if you had been knowing. (23:88)
They will say: It belongs to God!
Say: How, then, are you under a spell! (23:89)
Nay! We brought them The Truth and,
truly, they are ones who lie. (23:90)
God took not to Himself any son,
nor had there been any god with Him.
For, then, each god would have taken away what he created.
And some of them would have ascended over some others.
Glory be to God above all that they allege! (23:91)
He is the One Who Knows the unseen and the visible.
Exalted be He above partners they ascribe. (23:92)

COMMENTARY°

The chapter then takes the ungrateful on a further round of reflection, in the hope that their hearts will awaken when they see the pointers to faith within themselves and in the universe at large. *A*(23:78-23:80)

Indeed, if we would only reflect on our own form and constitution, the multi- faceted potential we have been given, and the faculties of perception with which we have been blessed, we would certainly acknowledge God. His guidance would be all these great faculties within us that testify to God's Oneness. No one other than God Almighty could produce such a creation with all these miracu-

lous aspects, large and small. For example, how does our sense of hearing function? How are sounds picked up and distinguished? How does our eyesight function, sorting out shapes and shades of light? And then, what about our mind and how it works? How does it recognize forms and things? How does it understand meanings, concepts, values, feelings and physical forms?

The mere understanding of the nature of these senses and faculties and their ways of functioning is, in itself, a miraculous human discovery. How do we, then, look at their creation and placement in man's body in such a way that is best suited to the nature of man's world. The degree of harmony achieved here reflects an overwhelming delicacy. Should only one of the many ratios that need to be met, in either man's nature or the nature of the universe, be disturbed, the whole relation no longer functions. Ears are not able to pick out sound, and eyes no longer see light. It is God's perfect design and limitless power that has achieved this perfect balance between human nature and the universe in which we live. But we do not show gratitude to God for His favors: *And He it is Who caused you to grow, have the ability to hear and sight and mind. But you give little thanks!* (23:78) Gratitude begins with a clear acknowledgement of the One who has given us all these favors and blessings, glorifying Him and recognizing His attributes, then addressing all worship to Him alone His Oneness is testified by His creation. Gratitude is further enhance when we use our faculties and senses to enjoy life in the manner c a firm believer who looks up to God before every action and in every situation.

It is He Who made you numerous on the earth and to Him you will be assembled. (23:79) He has placed you in charge of building human life on earth, after He gave you your hearing, eyesight and mind, as well as all the faculties and potentials that you need to fulfil the task assigned to you. (23:79) And to Him you shall be gathered when you will be accountable for all that you do in your lives on earth. You will be rewarded for all the good you do, and for following divine guidance. By contrast, you will reap the fruits of any evil or corruption of which you are guilty. Your lives on earth are not meant in vain, and you are not carelessly abandoned in your habitat. It is all for a definite purpose God has determined.

Both life and death occur at every moment, but it is God alone who causes them both to occur. *And it is He Who gives life and causes to die and His is the alteration of nighttime and daytime. Will you not, then, be reasonable?* (23:80) The human being, the highest of all creatures on earth, cannot give life to a single cell. Similarly, we are totally incapable of depriving any living being of its life in

the full sense of the word. People may be the means of ending life, but they are not the ones who truly deprive a living entity of its life. It is God alone who grants life and causes death.

He is the One who has set this alternation in operation, just like He grants life and takes it away. Both sets of parallel situations are natural laws: one operates within the human being while the other operates in the world at large. When life is taken away from a particular body, it stops functioning and becomes motionless. Similarly, when light is taken away from the earth it darkens and becomes stagnant. But then life is brought back again and light is allowed to spread as the alternation takes place and the cycle continues uninterrupted, for as long as God wills. *Will you not, then, be reasonable?* (23:80) Will you not draw the right conclusion and admit that it is all part of God's perfect design and elaborate planning. It is He alone who is in full control of life and the universe.

The chapter now stops its argument with the ungrateful, and reports their claims about resurrection and reckoning in the life to come. This discussion follows a long list of signs and pointers confirming God's Oneness and His being the only Creator who causes life and death. (23:81- 23:83)

Their claims sound exceptionally singular after the chapter has enumerated many of the signs that testify to God's elaborate planning and His definite purpose of creation. It is He who has granted us our hearing, eyesight and mind, so that he is responsible for his deeds. He will thus earn a generous reward for his good actions or punishment for his bad ones. True reckoning and reward occur in full in the life to come. What we see in this life is that reward, whether good or bad, does not take place on earth. These are left until they fall due in the life to come.

God grants life and causes death. Hence, resurrection is by no means difficult. Life is breathed into beings at every moment, and it is only God who knows where it originates.

The point with these ungrateful is not that they fall short of appreciating God's wisdom and ability to resurrect life. They also ridicule the promises of resurrection and reward, saying that the same promise was given to their forefathers, but nothing of the sort has yet occurred. *Certainly, we were promised this—we and our fathers—before this. This is nothing but the fables of the ancient ones* (23:83) Resurrection will certainly occur at the time and place God has set for it in His elaborate plan. It will be neither brought forward nor put back at anyone's request, or in response to the ridicule of anyone who is unable to see the truth.

The Arab idolaters of old were muddled in their faith. They did

not deny God. Nor did they deny that He is the Creator of the heavens and earth or that He is always in full control of everything in the universe. But they, nevertheless, assigned to Him partners and claimed that they worshipped those partners so that they could bring them closer to God. They also claimed that He had daughters. Exalted is God above all such claims. Hence the chapter puts to them the facts that they acknowledge in order to set the record straight and bring them back to the true faith based on God's absolute Oneness. This is the logical conclusion to the premises they acknowledge. Indeed, they would have arrived at this conclusion themselves had they not deviated from their uncorrupted nature: (23:84-23:89)

This shows the extent of the confusion that lacks sound reasoning. It tells us to what extent the beliefs of the idolaters had degenerated by the time the Quranic message was revealed. The first question asks about the ownership of this earthly world: *Say: To whom belongs the earth and whoever is in it if you had been knowing?* (23:84) They acknowledge that they all belong to God, but they overlook this true fact when they address their worship to deities other than Him. Hence the question the Prophet is told to put to them: *They will say: To God! Say: Then, will you not recollect?* (23:85)

This question: *Say: Who is the Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Sublime Throne?* (23:86) is about absolute Lordship that controls the whole universe and God's Supreme Throne. The term 'seven heavens' may refer to seven celestial bodies, or solar systems, or seven clusters of stars, or seven galaxies, or any seven astronomical entities. When God's Throne is mentioned, it implies a reference to His might and control of the universe and all existence. Hence when they are asked about the Lordship over all these, they give the right answer, saying that they all belong to God. Yet they do not show any fear of the Lord of the Supreme Throne who controls all seven heavens and what lies beyond them. They associate with Him idols that cannot lift themselves when they are thrown on the ground. Hence, the question: *They will say: It belongs to God! Say: Then, will you not be God-conscious?* (23:87)

This question: *Say: In whose hand is the kingdom of everything and He grants protection? No one is granted protection against Him if you had been knowing.* (23:88) is about power and dominion, asking them about the One who has power over all things, and who gives protection to all of His creatures so that no one can harm them in any way, other than according to His will. At the same time, no one can protect anyone or anything else against God. If God wants to inflict harm or punishment on any of His creatures, nothing can prevent it. Again they acknowledge that such power belongs to God alone.

Hence the question asking them about the cause of their delusion, which leaves them like people bewitched: *They will say: It belongs to God! Say: How, then, are you under a spell!* (23:89)

Having refuted all the idolaters' claims about God, taking to Himself a son or partners, the chapter states in all clarity the true principle of God's Oneness as explained by His Messenger, the Prophet Muhammad: (23:90-23:92)

Note how this statement employs different methods and styles. First, all argument with the idolaters is closed, and an emphatic assertion of their lying is given:*Nay! We brought them The Truth and, truly, they are ones who lie.* (23:90) Then follow some of the details of their lies: *God took not to Himself any son, nor had there been any god with Him.* (23:91) Irrefutable proof is then stated rendering all their claims false and showing the absurdity of pagan beliefs based on associating partners with God: *For, then, each god would have taken away what he created. And some of them would have ascended over some others.* (23: 91) Each deity would stress his independence and conduct the affairs of his creation according to his own law. Thus, every part of the universe, and every group of creatures would have a different basis and laws. There would be no common code applying to them all. *Glory be to God above all that they allege!* (23:91) Such superiority could take the form of a more sophisticated law operating in a particular part of the universe. However, the universe as a whole cannot function properly unless it is subject to a single law that applies to all its parts and all creatures living in it.

None of this multiplicity is found in the universe, where consistency of structure proves the Oneness of its Creator, and inner harmony testifies to its being run by a single will. Indeed, we clearly see that all parts of the universe function in perfect harmony: *God took not to Himself any son, nor had there been any god with Him. For, then, each god would have taken away what he created. And some of them would have ascended over some others. Glory be to God above all that they allege!* (23:91)

None other than God has any authority over any part of His creation, knowing anything that is unknown to God. *He is the One Who Knows the unseen and the visible. Exalted be He above partners they ascribe.* (23:92)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experi-

ences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QUESTIONS

What does the Quranic message want to communicate? Why?
What else do I want to say about it and why?
What else do I know or think about this?
How is what I am saying like and unlike what others have said?

What are we evaluating? Why?
Given these reasons or differences, can we generalize and list criteria?
Can we describe what to look for when judging an unjust person?
What features does an unjust person need to have? Why?

ANALYZING OR EVALUATING

What are the arguments given in the above signs?
What would someone who disagreed with these arguments say?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

Evaluating Reasoning by:•
Using specific analytic techniques, such as making assumptions explicit and evaluating them
Clarifying issues, conclusions, values, and words
Developing criteria for evaluation
Recognizing and pinpointing contradictions
Distinguishing relevant from irrelevant facts

LESSON 74(4). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY

ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ACTIONS

You should evaluate your actions in regard to Prophets of the past.

QURANIC CHAPTER 23: THE BELIEVERS (AL-MUMINUN)

SIGNS 23:93-23:118

Makkah: *Say: My Lord! If **You** will cause me to see*
what they are promised, (23:93)
then, assign me not, my Lord, to the folk,
the ones who are unjust. (23:94)
*And, truly, We cause **you** to see what*
We promise them as certainly ones who have power. (23:95)
*Drive **you** back evil deeds with what is fairer.*
We are greater in knowledge of what they allege. (23:96)
And say: My Lord! I take refuge with Thee
from the evil suggestions of the satans. (23:97)
And my Lord, I take refuge with Thee
so that they not attend me. (23:98)
Until when death drew near one of them, he said:
My Lord! Return me (23:99)
so that perhaps I will do as one in accord
with morality in what I left behind.
No indeed! Truly, it is only a word that one who converses says.
And ahead of them is a barrier
until the Day they are raised up. (23:100)
When the trumpet will be blown,
there will be no talk of kindred among them
that Day nor will they demand anything of one another. (23:101)
Then, whose balance was heavy with good deeds,
those, they are the ones who prosper. (23:102)
And among ones whose balance was made light,
then, those are those who lost themselves.
They will be ones who will dwell in hell forever. (23:103)
Their faces will fry in the fire. And they will be
ones who are morose in it. (23:104)
Be not My signs recounted to you,
yet you had been denying them? (23:105)
They will say: Our Lord! Our misgiving prevailed over us.
We had been a folk, ones who go astray. (23:106)
Our Lord! Bring us out of this.
Then, if ever we reverted, truly,

we will be ones who are unjust. (23:107)
He would say: Be driven away in it
and speak not to Me. (23:108)
Truly, there had been a group of people
of My servants who say:
Our Lord! We believed, so forgive us
and have mercy on us for ***You*** *are Best*
of the ones who are most merciful. (23:1019)
But you took them to yourselves as a laughing-stock
until they caused you to forget My Remembrance
and you had been laughing at them. (23:110)
Truly, I gave recompense this Day
for what they endured patiently.
Truly, they, they are the ones who are victorious! (23:111)
He said: Lingered you in expectation
on the earth for what number of years? (23:112)
They said: We lingered in expectation
a day or some of a day.
So ask the ones who count. (23:113)
He said: You lingered in expectation not but a little.
If you had but been knowing. (23:114)
Assumed you that We created you in amusement
and that to Us you would not be returned? (23:115)
So exalted be God! The King, The Truth.
There is no god but He,
the Lord of the Generous Throne! (23:116)
And whoever calls to another god with God
of which he has no proof, then, truly,
his reckoning is with his Lord.
Truly, the ones who are ungrateful will not prosper. (23:117)
And say: My Lord! Forgive and have mercy
and ***You*** *are Best of the ones who are most merciful.* (23:118)

COMMENTARY°

At this point, the chapter stops addressing or speaking about them. It now turns its attention to God's Messenger, commanding him to appeal to God so that he is not placed with such people, if he ever witnesses the fulfilment of the warnings of suffering they have been given. He is further instructed to seek refuge with His Lord from the evil ones, satans, so as not to be irritated by or become fed up at what the claim of the ungrateful: (23:93-23:98)

The Prophet is certainly not going to be with the wrongdoers

when God inflicts on them a severe punishment in fulfilment of His warnings. But this prayer which he is instructed to repeat serves as a further precaution. It is also meant as a lesson to all believers so that they do not slacken. They should also be on their guard, attending to their duties, seeking refuge with God and praying to Him to bestow His grace on them.

God is certainly able to fulfil what He has warned the wrongdoers of, and to make it all happen during the lifetime of His Messenger: *And, truly, We cause you to see what We promise them as certainly ones who have power.* (23:95)

At the time of the revelation of this chapter, the Prophet was still in Makkah enduring with his followers much persecution from the idolaters. The policy followed by the Muslim community then, in implementation of God's instructions, was to repel a bad thing with something better. Muslims also had to demonstrate their patience in the face of adversity, leaving their destiny entirely to God: *Drive you back evil deeds with what is fairer. We are greater in knowledge of what they allege.* (23:96)

The Prophet was certainly immune to any promptings or persuasion by evil ones. However, here he is instructed to pray for protection against all this in an urgent appeal for further immunity against their evil. Being the perfect role model for all Muslims in all generations, his appeal provides a lead for them to follow. They should also seek refuge with God against all temptation put in their way by the evil ones. Indeed the Prophet is instructed to appeal to God for protection against such evil people coming near him in any way. *And my Lord, I take refuge with You so that they not attend me.* (23:98)

This may also be interpreted as an appeal lest they come near him at the time of his death. This sense is strengthened by the sign that follows: (23:99) This follows the Quranic method that ensures an easy flow from one point to another.

This last passage of the chapter continues to discuss the fate of the idolaters, showing it in a complete scene of the Day of Resurrection. It starts with an image of approaching death ending this life, and moves on to show what happens after the Trumpet is blown and the dead are brought back to life. This is followed by an emphatic statement of God's Oneness, coupled with a stern warning to those who associate partners with God, putting them on notice of what awaits them if they persist in their erring ways. The chapter concludes with a directive given to the Prophet to seek God's forgiveness, and to pray for His grace. God is certainly the best of all who show mercy.

These: (23:99-23:100) are the scene of approaching death, when the person is certain that he is about to die. At this moment, he appeals for a return to life so as to have a second chance to do what he should have done in the first place. He wants to set things right with regard to the family and assets he is leaving behind. This is shown as if it is happening at the present moment, witnessed by all. But the appeal is made too late. Hence, the answer is not given to the person concerned. It is declared for all to understand. *So that perhaps I will do as one in accord with morality in what I left behind. No indeed! Truly, it is only a word that one who converses says. And ahead of them is a barrier until the Day they are raised up.*(23:100)

It is only a word that carries little or no significance. It does not deserve to be considered. Indeed the speaker does not merit any attention. It does not express any sincerity; rather, it is prompted by the dawning awareness of the great difficulty ahead. It expresses the great stress the speaker finds himself under, but it has no basis in conviction.

Thus ends the image of the speaker at the point of death. Suddenly, barriers are raised between him and the rest of the world. The matter is settled, contacts are severed, doors closed and the curtain dropped: *so that perhaps I will do as one in accord with morality in what I left behind. No indeed! Truly, it is only a word that one who converses says. And ahead of them is a barrier until the Day they are raised up.* (23:100) They neither belong to the people of this life, nor to those of the hereafter. They are in the stage in between, which will continue until all are resurrected.

The chapter now speaks about that day, giving an image of what happens then and raising it for all to see. *When the trumpet will be blown, there will be no talk of kindred among them that Day nor will they demand anything of one another.* (23:101) All bonds come to an end, and all values people observe in this life are no longer of any consequence. 'There will be no ties of kinship' then. The awesome atmosphere makes them all silent, with no one uttering as much as a word, let alone enquiring about others.

The process of reckoning and weighing up deeds and actions is shown to proceed with speed: (23:102-23:104) This process is shown in a material image, with action and movement taking place, in the standard pattern the Quran employs. Hence we dread the scene of those idolaters being scorched by the fire, their faces changing color, darkening and looking full of gloom. It is a terrible image that almost transmits pain.

Those with light weight have lost everything, including themselves. When a person loses himself, what else can he own? What is

left for him? He has lost the very thing that makes his existence meaningful, or that gives him personality.

At this point the chapter changes style. So far, it has employed a reporting format. Now it makes a direct address, speaking to the people themselves. This makes the physical punishment, terrible as it certainly is, much less painful than the humiliation that is now poured on them. This address is stated as if it were taking place at that very moment, starting a long dialogue:*Be not My signs recounted to you, yet you had been denying them?* (23:105) When they hear this question they imagine that they are allowed to speak and make a plea. They think that perhaps if they admit their guilt, their plea might be accepted: (23:106-23:107)

Their admission of guilt tells of the bitter feelings they experience. They are indeed miserable. But they have exceeded the limits they are allowed. To go beyond these is to be impolite when they are addressed by none other than God. They are only permitted to answer the question put to them. Indeed the question is perhaps made only by way of rebuke, and it requires no answer. Hence they are strongly censured: *He would say: Be driven away in it and speak not to Me.* (23:108) They are told to shut up and remain silent as only befits people held in ignominy.

Indeed they deserve all the punishment and the misery they are made to suffer. (23:109-23:110)

The crime they perpetrated was not merely that they disbelieved and made their rejection of the faith a personal matter, which is in itself a grave offense. They went much further by allowing their stupid impudence to go as far as ridiculing the believers who pray to God for mercy and forgiveness. They derided them so often that such derision became their main preoccupation, stopping them from remembering God and glorifying Him, and from reflecting on the numerous signs God has placed in the world pointing them in the direction of faith. They are now called upon to compare their own station with that of the people they ridiculed.*Truly, I gave recompense this Day for what they endured patiently. Truly, they, they are the ones who are victorious!* (23:111)

A new phase of interrogation follows this stern, humiliating reply and the reasons that led to it: *He said: Lingered you in expectation on the earth for what number of years?* (23:112) God certainly knows the answer, but the question is put to them to emphasize the triviality of life on earth and to stress the shortness of its duration. Yet they bartered the eternal life of the hereafter for their portion of life on earth. Now they feel that it was totally insignificant. In their despair they are impatient, and cannot bother about that life or its

number of years: *They said: We lingered in expectation a day or some of a day. So ask the ones who count.* (23:113) Stress, grief and despair ooze from their reply.

They are given an answer that tells them that their life on earth is very short compared to what awaits them. They only need to have the right measure. *He said: You lingered in expectation not but a little. If you had but been knowing.* (23:114) Again they are strongly rebuked for denying the life to come. This is coupled with an outline of the purpose behind resurrection. This purpose has been clearly stated ever since the first creation: *Assumed you that We created you in amusement and that to Us you would not be returned?* (23:115)

Any claim of partnership with God has absolutely no evidence to support it, neither from the universe and how it is run, nor from human logic or nature. Anyone who makes such a claim will have to face the reckoning in front of God, and the result is known in advance: *And whoever calls to another god with God of which he has no proof, then, truly, his reckoning is with his Lord. Truly, the ones who are ungrateful will not prosper.* (23:117) This is an unfailing rule that is hound to come true. Success, by contrast, is guaranteed for the believers.

The last sign in this chapter, The Believers, gives the instruction to turn to God appealing for His mercy and forgiveness: *And say: My Lord! Forgive and have mercy and You are Best of the ones who are most merciful.* (23:118)

Thus the opening of the chapter and its end jointly emphasize success for the believers and utter failure and loss for the ungrateful. Both elements stress the basic qualities of believers. Thus, the beginning states that the believers humble themselves in prayer, while the end instructs them to humbly appeal to God for forgiveness and mercy. Both make the chapter a complete, well designed unit.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QUESTIONS

What information are the ones who only believe in what was caused to descend to them using?

Where did they get that information?

What information is given about them?

What does this remind you of? Why?
How are the interpretations similar? Different?
How important are the differences? Why?
What does this tell us about our topic?
How useful is that comparison?
Can anyone think of an even more useful comparison?

What is the meaning behind the information given in the above sign?
What the assumption of those who say that all disbelievers should be killed?
What is the Quranic response to their assumption?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I tried to find the key concept of one of the Quranic signs.
I was able to analyze my actions today and evaluate them.

LESSON 75(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY MAKING PLAUSIBLE INFERENCES OR INTERPRETATIONS

THE MIDDLE COMMUNITY
ISLAMIC MODERATION:[3]

Has helped advocate a balanced vision of Islam that is inclusive of the interests both of the individual and society, keeping in sight also its spiritual, rational, and scientific dimensions, just as it seeks to strike a middle ground between traditional and modernist understandings of Islam, not only for the present generation but also for those that follow.

Tends to bind the various dimensions of Islam together under the Quranic principle of *tawhid*, not only as a religion but also a legal system with its own economic and political characteristics.

Strikes a balance between the concerns of continuity and change by safeguarding that which is permanent and unchangeable as opposed to that which is liable to change, keeping the balance. The unchangeable parts of Islam include the pillars of the faith such as devotional duties, and decisive injunctions upheld by universal consensus of the ummah throughout the ages. This can also be said of the basic principles of law and morality that are numerous, including human dignity, justice, accountability and the rule of law, honesty, trustworthiness, purity and cleanliness, honoring one's parents, fulfillment of promises, sincerity, patience and courage, as well as avoidance of criminality and aggression, theft, murder, lying, and so forth.

The changeable parts of Islam include the rulings of general custom (*urf*) personal reasoning and opinion (*ijtihad* and *fatwa*), especially those that lack a firm textual foundation: rules derived through analogy, juristic preference, and considerations of public interest, which are usually founded in an effective cause and rationale that may well become liable to change with the change of their underlying effective causes.

The unchangeable principles of Islam set in place a structure of values that gives the Muslim community (*ummah*) its distinctive identity, and those that are changeable are important for keeping pace with the unfolding changes of custom, science, and civilization.

QURANIC CHAPTER 32: THE PROSTRATION (AL-SAJDAH)
SIGNS 32:1-32:11

Makkah: *Alif Lam Mim.* (32:1)
The sending down successively of the Book,
there is no doubt in it.
It is from the Lord of the worlds. (32:2)

Or they say: He devised it.
*Nay! It is The Truth from **your** Lord*
*that **you** warn a folk to whom no warner*
*approached them before **you**,*
so that perhaps they will be truly guided. (32:3)
God! It is He Who created the heavens and the earth
and whatever is between them in six days.
Again, He turned His attention to the Throne.
You will have none other than Him
as protector and no intercessor.
Will you not, then, recollect? (32:4)
He manages every command
from the heaven to the earth.
Again, it will go up to Him in a day, the span
of which had been a thousand years
of what you number. (32:5)
That is the One Who Knows
of the unseen and the visible,
The Almighty, The Compassionate (32:6)
Who did everything that He created well.
And He began the creation of the human being
from clay. (32:7)
Again, He made human progeny from
the extraction of despicable water. (32:8)
Again, He shaped him
and breathed into him His Spirit.
And He made for you
the ability to hear and sight and minds.
But you give little thanks! (32:9)
They said: When we went astray on the earth
will we be in a new creation?
Nay! In the meeting with their Lord
they are ones who disbelieve. (32:10)
Say: The angel of death, who was charged with you,
will call you to itself.
Again, you will be returned to your Lord. (32:11)

COMMENTARY°

The three separate letters the chapter begins with were well known to the Arabs who were the first to be addressed by the Quran. They knew what speech they could compose of them and their like. They knew full well the great difference between their composition

and this Quran. It is a wide gulf recognized by any speech expert and anyone who practises putting ideas and meanings into words and sentences. Such a person realizes that the Quranic text has an inherent, subtle power that makes it particularly effective as it addresses people's hearts and minds. No human composition can have any similar effect. This is a fact that cannot be denied. A listener to the Quran will definitely recognize it and interact with it, to the exclusion of all other speech, even though he might not know that what he is listening to is the Quran. Numerous are the examples people of all sorts have experienced, confirming this fact.

The difference between the Quran and what people make up, using letters and sounds is unbridgeable. It is the same as the gulf between God's creation and what people make in any particular field. What is of God's making is distinct and remarkable. It cannot be matched by humans, even in the most mundane of things. Look at the color distribution in a single flower: it appears like a miracle for even the most skilful of painters in all ages. The same applies to the Quran and what people compose when they use the letters and sounds of language. *he sending down successively of the Book, there is no doubt in it. It is from the Lord of the worlds.* (32:2) This is a fact no one can deny. All doubt is negated in the middle of the sentence, because this is the essence of the question, and the point the sign wants to make. That it is preceded by the separate letters puts the doubters face to face with the indisputable fact. This book is composed of the like of such letters which they know, yet its construction is superior in every way. They do not deny that superiority in practice, or when they apply any recognized standards of judging speech.

Those whom God's Messenger is ordered to warn were polytheists, people who associated partners with God. Therefore, the chapter explains God's attribute by which they know the truth of God. It also distinguishes who deserves to have this great name, God, and who must never be associated with His status: (32:4-32:9)

This expression refers to the fact that God is above all creation. We cannot say anything about the throne, except to take it as a name. The word *istawa* is different, as it clearly indicates elevation and exaltation. The Arabic text also uses the word thumma, which is the conjunction 'then', but it is clear here that it does not indicate any chronological order, because no change of situation applies to God. He, limitless is He in His glory, is not in a certain situation, nor does He then move to a new one. This does not apply to God. It is only an abstract order. His exaltation means that His is a level high above that of His creation, and this is expressed in the way the sign is composed.§

Who could have? *God! It is He Who created the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them in six days. Again, He turned His attention to the Throne. You will have none other than Him as protector and no intercessor. Will you not, then, recollect.* (32:4) It is sufficient to remember this fact and reflect on it for people to acknowledge God and to turn to Him alone, abandoning all else.

In addition to all that has been said about creation and elaborate planning, it is now stated that whatever takes place in the heavens, the earth or in between them will be presented to Him on the Day of Judgement when He will determine their fates: *He manages every command from the heaven to the earth.* (32:5) The expressions used here provide a great, broad perspective: 'from the celestial space to the earth.' Thus, human perception is given an impression that it can contemplate. In fact, the domain of what God regulates and governs is far greater than that of the heavens and the earth. For us, however, it is sufficient that we look at this broad expanse and reflect on the fact that God regulates everything in it when we cannot even imagine the figures of its dimensions.

Everything that has been determined and planned, with its results and consequences, is then put to Him, in His exalted presence, on the day He has determined for reviewing the results of actions, words, objects and living creatures.*Again, it will go up to Him in a day, the span of which had been a thousand years of what you number.* (32:5) Nothing of this is created in vain or abandoned or neglected. All run their course in accordance with God's design to an appointed time. They all "ascend to Him," because everything and every position and stage is below that of God Almighty. Hence they ascend or are raised to Him, by His permission, when He wills.

The Creator who regulates everything is the One who knows everything, whether absent or present. *That is the One Who Knows of the unseen and the visible, The Almighty, The Compassionate.* (32:6) He is in complete control of all creation, and He is able to accomplish what He wills. But He is also Most Merciful in what He wills and plans for His creation.

The Quran directs our attentions to this incomparable beauty so that we contemplate what we see and thus enjoy it. This is achieved through the statement: *Who did everything that He created well. And He began the creation of the human being from clay.* (32:7) We are thus invited to look for beauty and excellence throughout the universe.

One aspect of His excellent creation is the fact that our creation was begun from clay. The phraseology of this sign allows it to be understood as meaning that the clay was present at the beginning, in

the first stage. No mention is made of the number, length or duration of the stages.

This: *Again, He made human progeny from the extraction of despicable water.* (32:8) is a reference to semen, the fluid that represents the first stage of the foetus, going on to become a clinging cell mass, then an embryo that soon acquires bones and organs before the foetus reaches its complete form. It is a great journey when we consider the extraordinary development that this tiny drop of humble fluid goes through until it becomes a human being with perfect shape and constitution. The gulf between the first and the final stages is great indeed. This is expressed in the Quran in a single sign: *Again, He shaped him and breathed into him His Spirit. And He made for you the ability to hear and sight and minds. But you give little thanks!* (32:9)

In the light of this first miraculous creation of the human being and its miraculous progress, the chapter refers to the ungrateful' objections and doubts about resurrection. *They said: When we went astray on the earth will we be in a new creation? Nay! In the meeting with their Lord they are ones who disbelieve.* (32:10)

They cannot imagine that God will create them anew after they have died and become part of the earth. What is strange about this when compared to the first creation? God began the creation of the human being from clay, which means that its origin goes back to the earth in which they claim their bodies will decompose and be lost Indeed, the second creation is akin to the first one, with nothing strange about it. *They said: When we went astray on the earth will we be in a new creation? Nay! In the meeting with their Lord they are ones who disbelieve.* (32:10) It is such denial that makes them entertain doubts and objections to something true and clear. After all, something akin to it occurs at every moment. Therefore, their objections are answered with a statement making clear that they will die and be resurrected. The practical proof of the first creation is more than enough: *Say: The angel of death who was charged with you, will call you to itself. Again, you will be returned to your Lord.* (32:11) This is given as a confirmed piece of news. Who though is the angel of death? How does he gather people's souls? This is something that belongs to the realm beyond our perception, which is known to God alone. From Him we receive only accurate information. We can add nothing to what we receive from this source.

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?

3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

Analyze one or more of the signs in this section according to the eight points of reasoning above.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to understand what Islamic Moderation is.
I was able to think of ways to implement Islamic Moderation in my life

LESSON 75(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY

RECOGNIZING CONTRADICTIONS

We have seen the Quranic sign that claims one of the proofs of its divine origin is the question of contradictions. A human created document would contain many contradictions while the Quran does not. The Quranic style is one of harmony and consistency.

Whereas there are no contradictions in the Quran and its signs, there are man-made contradictions that arise from the interpretation of some of the verses, in particular, 4:34 as we move forward to Problem to Solve.

Consistency is a fundamental—some would say the defining—ideal of critical thinkers. They strive to remove contradictions from their beliefs, and are wary of contradictions in others. As would-be fair-minded thinkers they strive to judge like cases in a like manner. Perhaps the most difficult form of consistency to achieve is that between word and deed. Self-serving double standards are one of the most common problems in human life. Children are in some sense aware of the importance of consistency when they ask their parents: Why don't I get to do what they get to do? They are frustrated by double standards, yet are given little help in getting insight into them and dealing with them. Critical thinkers can pinpoint specifically where opposing arguments or views contradict each other, distinguishing the contradictions from compatible beliefs, thus focussing their analyses of conflicting views.

QURANIC CHAPTER 32: THE PROSTRATION (AL-SAJDAH)
SIGNS 32:12-32:22

Makkah: *And if you but see*
when the ones who sin become ones who bend down their heads
before their Lord: Our Lord! We perceived and heard.
So return us.
We will do as ones in accord with morality.
Truly, we are now ones who are certain. (32:12)
And if We willed it, We would have,
surely, given every soul its guidance,
but My saying will be realized.
I will fill hell with genies and humanity one and all. (32:13)
Then, experience it.
As you forgot the meeting of this Day of yours, truly,
We forgot you. And experience the infinite punishment
for what you had been doing. (32:14)
Only those believe in Our signs who,
when they were reminded of them, fell down,
ones who prostrate themselves
and glorified the praise of their Lord

and they grow not arrogant, (32:15)
Madinah (32:16)
Madinah (32:17)
Madinah (32:18)
Madinah (32:19)
Madinah (32:20)
Makkah: *And, certainly, We will cause them to experience the closer punishment other than the greater punishment so that perhaps they will return.* (32:21)
And who does greater wrong than he who was reminded of the signs of His Lord, then, he turned aside from them? Truly, on the ones who sin, We are ones who requite. (32:22)

COMMENTARY°

Since they object to the very concept of resurrection, and express doubts about coming back to life, the chapter raises before their eyes a scene of the Day of Judgement which is full of life and movement. Moreover, it reports its dialogue as if it was taking place now: (32:12-32:14)

Before the chapter gives the answer to their humble request, it states the facts that apply to the whole situation and which determine people's fates: *And if We willed it, We would have, surely, given every soul its guidance, but My saying will be realized. I will fill hell with genies and humanity one and all.* (32:13)

Those evildoers who stand in front of God, hanging their heads are among those upon whom God's word shall be fulfilled. They will be told: *As you forgot the meeting of this Day of yours, truly, We forgot you.* (32:14) The reference here is to the Day of Judgment, but it is described as this present day, as if we are looking at its scenes now. They are made to taste the suffering because they forgot this day and neglected to prepare for it when they had all the time they needed to do so. *And experience the infinite punishment for what you had been doing.* (32:14) Needless to say, God does not forget anyone, but they are treated like people who have been forgotten. They are humiliated and abandoned.

The curtains are drawn and the final word has been said. The guilty evildoers are left to their abject fate. The reader feels as he passes these signs as if he has left them behind where they are looking fixedly at what awaits them.

Such is the fate of the wicked in the life to come. But they are not left alone until then. God warns them that they may incur pun-

ishment in this present life before they suffer the punishment of the Day of Judgment: *And, certainly, We will cause them to experience the closer punishment other than the greater punishment so that perhaps they will return.* (32:21) Yet this suffering, which is close at hand, carries with it an aspect of grace. God does not like to expose His creatures to suffering unless they incur such punishment by the actions they do or fail to do, and by being persistent in what incurs punishment. Therefore, God warns them that He will make them suffer in this life "so that they might return [to the right faith]." This may, perchance, let their nature wake up. The pain may bring them back to the truth. If they do, then they will avoid the fate of the wicked which we saw earlier.

However, if they continue to turn away when they are reminded of God's revelations and signs, and if they fail to return to the truth after their suffering in this present life, then they are confirmed wrongdoers: *And who does greater wrong than he who was reminded of the signs of His Lord, then, he turned aside from them?* (32:22) In such a situation, they deserve strong retribution both in this life and in the life to come: *Truly, on the ones who sin, We are ones who requite.* (32:22) What a serious and fearful warning from God Almighty to those who deserve such punishment.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quran guides to what is what is honest, honorable, worthy, moral, conscientious, good, virtuous. What does the Quran give to those who are

guided? Good tidings to the ones who believe and who act in accord with morality. It is those who believe and who are moral people who will have a great compensation. Following God's guidance is to act morally. Acting in accord with morality results in a great compensation from God. Human beings have been created with a moral compass.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to explore possible ways to reconcile apparent contradictions.
Could someone hold both of these views?
How might someone argue that someone can believe both?

LESSON 75(3). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY NOTING SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

Quranic critical thinkers try to treat things that are similar in a similar way and things that are different in a different way. Uncritical thinkers tend not to see the significant similarities and differences. It often is the case that things that appear to be superficially similar are often significantly different and things that appear to be superficially different are often essentially the same. It takes practice to be able to distinguish between the two. As this sensitivity develops, it influences how students experience, how they describe, how they categorize, and how they reason about things. They become more careful and discriminating in their use of words and phrases.

QURANIC CHAPTER 32: THE PROSTRATION (AL-SAJDAH) SIGNS 32:23-32:30

Makkah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (32:23)

And We assigned leaders from among them
to guide under Our command
when they endured patiently.
And they had been certain of Our signs. (32:24)
Truly, your Lord is He Who will distinguish among them
on the Day of Resurrection about what
they had been at variance in it. (32:25)
Guides them not how many We caused to perish
of generations before them amidst whose dwellings they walk?
Truly, in that are the signs. Will they not then hear? (32:26)
Consider they not
that We drive water to the barren dust of earth?
We drive out crops with it
from which their flocks eat and they themselves.
Will they not, then, perceive? (32:27)
And they say: When is this victory if you had been
ones who are sincere? (32:28)
Say: On the Day of Victory there will be no profit
for those who disbelieved if they,
then, have belief nor will they be given respite. (32:29)
So turn you aside from them and wait awhile.
Truly they are ones who are waiting awhile. (32:30)

COMMENTARY°

The section speaking about the believers and ungrateful, the God-conscious and the wicked, and the fates of both groups is now complete. The chapter then begins a new section that speaks briefly

about Moses and the revelations God gave him to serve as guidance to the Children of Jacob, just like the Quran was given to Muhammad to provide guidance to those who believe in God. Both recipients of divine revelations share common principles and a common faith. Choosing those who were patient in adversity among Moses' people to be leaders of their community carries strong implications for the believers, urging them to maintain their firm beliefs and to remain steadfast and patient in adversity. These are the qualities that make them leaders in this life and ensure that they will be established on earth. (32:23-32:25)

The clause, *so be you not hesitant about meeting Him* is an interpolation which means to assure the Prophet of the truth that has been given to him. It emphasizes that it is the same truth that Moses advocated as revealed in his book. The two prophets and the two books meet in their advocacy of this truth. This is the explanation I prefer for this clause.

Some commentators, however, suggest, that the phrase means 'about meeting with it', that is, the Torah, while others say that '*about meeting with Him*', means meeting the Giver of the Torah while still others say '*about meeting with him*' implies the meeting between Moses and Muhammad during the latter's night journey and ascension to heaven. Indeed convergence on the basis of truth and a common faith is the more likely as it serves to reassure the Prophet so that he remains steadfast despite all the opposition and persecution he and his followers encounter. It is also in line with what is stated in the next sign: *And We assigned leaders from among them to guide under Our command when they endured patiently. And they had been certain of Our signs.* (32:24) This implies that if the small group of believers living in Makkah at the time persevered and remained patient in adversity, like those leaders of the Children of Jacob, they would be leaders in the Muslim community. It establishes the characteristics that qualify people to be leaders, namely, patience in adversity and unshakeable faith. *Truly, your Lord is He Who will distinguish among them on the Day of Resurrection about what they had been at variance in it.* (32:25)

Now the chapter takes those who deny the divine message on a round that looks at the fates suffered by earlier communities who took a similar stance: *Guides them not how many We caused to perish of generations before them amidst whose dwellings they walk? Truly, in that are the signs. Will they not then hear?* (32:26)

The remains of past communities tell a highly effective story that touches sensitive hearts and alert consciences. The Arabs who were the first to be addressed by the Quran used to travel by the re-

mains of the peoples of the Aad and Thamud, and they saw the ruins of the townships where Lot's people lived. The chapter wonders how these were available to them, and how they pass them by, without feeling the need to avoid a similar fate. It tells them what sort of action is needed to avoid God's punishment: *Guides them not how many We caused to perish of generations before them amidst whose dwellings they walk? Truly, in that are the signs. Will they not then hear?* (32:26) It is indeed right that they should listen carefully to the histories of those communities through whose townships they pass, and that they should listen to the warnings before they are overwhelmed by a similar punishment.

The chapter then touches their hearts with an image of life as it starts, showing them a barren land before it quickens and life springs out of it. This image provides a contrast with the earlier one showing death and ruin devastating a land that was once full of life: *We drive out crops with it from which their flocks eat and they themselves. Will they not, then, perceive?* (32:27)

The final section refers to their hastening of the punishment against which they have been warned, and their doubts about the warnings they have been given. They are warned once more against the fulfilment of what they are hastening, when no declaration of belief will be of any benefit. Nor will they be given any respite. The chapter concludes with a directive telling the Prophet to leave them to their inevitable fate: (32:28-32:30)

The judgment referred to here means a decision on the dispute between the two parties and the fulfilment of the promise which they thought would never come true. They could not understand God's purpose in delaying it to the time He appointed for it. Their hastening of it will not change its timing, nor can they escape it.

This: *Say: On the Day of Victory there will be no profit for those who disbelieved if they, then, have belief nor will they be given respite* (32:29) is true whether this day occurs in this present life when God takes them as ungrateful, giving them no respite as their belief will be of no benefit, or in the life to come when their appeals for respite are refused. This answer sends a tremor of fear into their hearts. This is then followed with the final note in the chapter: *So turn you aside from them and wait awhile. Truly they are ones who are waiting awhile.* (32:30) This is a clear implicit warning of the consequences of waiting. It is made all the more explicit given the Prophet is told to turn away from them and leave them to their inevitable destiny.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC THINKING WORKS

What similarities and differences do the Quranic verses point out between the practice of the early Quraysh and the Quranic message?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I tried using writing as a way to learn by writing summaries in my own words of important points from the Quranic signs here.

I was able to formulate test questions.

I wrote out answers to my own questions.

EPILOGUE

THE FIRST PLEDGE OF AQABA BY TWELVE MEN FROM MADINAH, DHU AL-HIJJA 2 BH/620 CE

The days of pilgrimage at last came round, and Muhammad sought the appointed spot, in a narrow sheltered glen near Mina.[1] His apprehensions were at once dispelled. A band of twelve faithful disciples were there ready to acknowledge him their prophet. Ten were of the Khazraj, and two of the Aws, tribe.

IBN ISHAQ

At the pilgrimage (Dhu Hajja) in 620 CE, twelve Helpers attended the fair and met at al-Aqaba—this was the first pledge of Aqaba—where they gave the Messenger the pledge of women. This was before the duty of making war was laid upon them.

These men were: From al-Najjar: Asad ibn Zurara; Auf ibn al-Harith and Muadh, his brother, both sons of Afra. From the Zurayq ibn Amir: Rafi ibn Malik and Dhakwan ibn Abd al-Qays ibn Khalada ibn Mukhlid ibn Amir ibn Zurayq.

From the Auf of the clan of Ghanm ibn Auf ibn Amr ibn Auf who were the Qawaqil: Ubada ibn al-Samit ibn Qays ibn Asram ibn Fihr ibn Thalaba ibn Ghanm; and Abu Abd al-Rahman who was Yazid ibn Thalaba ibn Khazma ibn Asram ibn Amr ibn Ammara of the Ghusayna of Bally, an ally of theirs.

From the Salim ibn Auf ibn Amr ibn al-Khazraj of the clan o the al-Ajlan ibn Zayd ibn Ghanm ibn Salim: al-Abbas ibn Ubada ibi Nadala ibn Malik ibn al-Ajlan.

From the Salima: Uqba ibn Amir.

From the Sawad: Qutba ibn Amir ibn Hadida. The Aws were represented by Abu 'l-Haytham ibn al-Tayyihan whose name was Malik of the clan of Abdul Ashhal ibn Jusham ibn al-Harith ibn al Khazraj ibn Amr ibn Malik ibn al-Aws.

From the Amr ibn Auf ibn Malik ibn al-Aws: Uwaym ibn Saida.

Yazid ibn Abu Habib from Abu Marthad ibn Abdullah al-Yazani from Abdul Rahman ibn Usayla al-Sannaji from Ubayda ibn al-Samit told me: I was present at the First Pledge of Aqaba. There were twelve of us and we pledged ourselves to the Prophet and that was before war was enjoined, the undertaking being that we should associate nothing with God; we should not steal; we should not commit fornication; nor kill our offspring; we should not slander our neighbors; we should not disobey him in what was right; if we fulfilled this paradise would be ours; if we committed any of those sins it was for God to punish or forgive as He pleased.

> Al-Zuhri from Abd Allah ibn Abd Allah al-Khaulani Abu Idris said that Ubayda ibn al-Samit told him: We gave allegiance to the Messenger that we would associate nothing with God, not steal, not commit fornication, not kill our offspring, not slander our neighbor, not disobey him in what was right; if we fulfilled this paradise would be ours; and if we committed any of those sins we should be punished in this world and this would serve as expiation; if the sin was concealed until the Day of Resurrection, then it would be for God to decide whether to punish or to forgive.

This was afterwards called the Pledge of Women, because, as not embracing any stipulation to defend the Prophet, it was the only oath required of the female sex. When the twelve had agreed to this, Muhammad replied: If you fulfill the pledge, Paradise will be your reward. He that shall fail in any part thereof, to God belongs His concern either to punish or to forgive. The memorable proceeding is known in the annals of Islam as the First Pledge of Aqaba because that was the name of the area where Muhammad with the twelve had met.[2]

Spread of Islam at Madinah CE 2 BH/620-621 CE

The twelve were now committed to the cause of Muhammad. They returned to Madinah as missionaries of Islam, again to report their success at the following pilgrimage. So prepared was the ground and so zealous the propagation, that the new faith spread rapidly from house to house and from tribe to tribe. The Jews looked on in amazement. The people whom for generations they had vainly endeavored to convince of the errors of idolatry were now of their own accord casting their idols to the moles and to the bats and professing belief in the one true God. The secret lay in the adaptation of the instrument. Judaism, foreign in its birth, touched no Arab sympathies. Islam, engrafted on the faith and superstition, the customs and the nationality of the Peninsula, found ready access to the heart.

Musab Deputed to Instruct Converts at Madinah

The leaders in the movement soon found themselves unable to keep pace with its rapid spread. So they wrote to the Prophet for a teacher able to recite the Quran and instruct inquirers in the faith. The young disciple Musab, who had lately returned from exile in Abyssinia, was sent to Madinah for that purpose. He lodged at Madinah with Asad ibn Zurara who had already been in the habit of gathering the converts together for prayer and reciting the Quran.

In course of time, others were sent for the same purpose, and among them the blind Abd Allah ibn Umm Maktum. The following narrative will illustrate the manner in which Islam was propagated at Madinah. Asad and Musab visited the quarter of the Aws, and, entering one of their gardens, sat down by a

well where a company of believers gathered round them.

Now Saad ibn Muadh and Usayd, chief men of the tribe, heard of the gathering at the well, and Saad, unwilling himself to interfere (being related to Asad), bade Usayd go and disperse them. Usayd seized his weapons, and hurrying to the spot, abused them. What brings you two here amongst us, he said, to mislead our youths and silly folk? Beware, if you have any care for your lives.

Musab disarmed his wrath by courteously inviting him to sit down and listen. Then Usayd stuck his spear into the ground and seated himself. As he listened, he was charmed with what he heard and forthwith embraced Islam. And he said: There is another beside me, Saad ibn Muadh, whom I will send to you. If yon can gain him over, there will not be one in his tribe left unconverted.

So he departed and sent Saad, and Musab persuaded him in like manner. So Saad returned to his tribe and swore that he would not speak to man or woman who did not acknowledge Muhammad. So great was his influence that by the evening every one of his clan was converted.[3]

There is a story of an aged chief who, like others at Madinah, had an image in his house. This image the young converts used to cast every night into a filthy well, and the old man as regularly cleansed it until, one day, they tied it to a dead dog and cast it into the well whereupon he abandoned his image and believed.

The devotions of the Aws and the Khazraj tribes were now conducted tc gether by the earnest missionary for even in such a matter the rival clans we impatient of a common leader from amongst themselves. So speedily, withot let or hindrance did Islam grow and take firm root at Madinah, and thus unexpectedly were the people prepared for a greater demonstration at the next time of pilgrimage.[4]

APPENDIX 1: CORRELATION BETWEEN THE PRESENT ORDER OF CHAPTERS IN THE QURAN AND THEIR CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

1 = 96
2 = 68
3 = 73
4 = 74
5 = 1
6 = 111
7 = 81
8 = 87
9 = 92
10 = 89
11 = 93
12 = 94
13 = 103
14 = 100
15 = 108
16 = 102
17 = 107
18 = 109
19 = 105
20 = 113
21 = 114
22 = 112
23 = 53
24 = 80
25 = 97
26 = 91
27 = 85
28 =95
29 = 106
30 = 101
31 = 75
32 = 104
33 = 77
34 = 50
35 = 90
36 = 86
37 = 54
38 = 38
39 = 7
40 = 72
41 = 36
42 = 25
43 = 35
44 = 19
45 = 20
46 = 56
47 = 26
48 = 27
49 = 28
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82 = 82
83 = 84
84 = 30
85 = 29
86 = 83
87 = 2
88 = 8
89 = 3
90 = 33
91 = 60
92 = 4
93 = 99
94 = 57
95 = 47
96 = 13
97 = 55
98 = 76
99 = 65
100 = 78
101 = 59
102 = 24
103 = 22
104 = 63
105 = 58
106 = 49
107 = 66
108 = 64
109 = 61
110 = 62
111 = 48
112 = 5
113 = 9
114 = 110

NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION TO QURANIC THINKING BY HASHIM KAMALI

1. The rough equation that earlier Muslim scholars drew between the Islamic and Western conceptions of reason tended to be oblivious of the categories of reason and the Western critique of reason that divided it into "instrumental reason, critical reason, functional reason, abstract reason, imperialist reason, decentering reason" and the like. For details see Abdelwahab M. Elmessiri, "Features of the New Islamic Discourse," a Cairo conference paper, 1997: http:// www.21stcenturytrust.org/messiri.doc.

2. Some commentators have distinguished a total of 30 expressions that revolve around thinking over the *ayat*. See Abu Bakr al-Razi, *Tafsir al-Kabir* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1985), II, 222f.

3. Cf Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-'Ilm fi'l-Quran al-Karim* (Cairo: Maktaba Wahba, 1416/1996), 36.

4. Al-Isfahani, *Mufradat Alfaz al-Qur'an*, under "*Fikr*".

5. Cf., Karim Douglas Crow, "Islam and Reason" in *Al-Shajarah*, vol. 8, (2003),120-1.

6. Abbas Mahmud, "al-Agqad, Al-Tafkir Faridah Islamiyyah" (Thinking is an Islamic Obligation) quoted in Jamal Badi and Mustapha Tajdin, *Creative Thinking: An Islamic Perspective*, 2nd edn. (Kuala Lumpur: International Islamic University Malaysia, 2005), 6.

7. Cf. al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-'Ilm*, 41-45 quoting ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's *Miftah Dar al-Sa'ada*, and 'Agqad's book entitled *al-Tafkir Faridah Islamiyya* (Beirut: al-Matba'a al-'Asriyya, 1992).

8. Cf. al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-Ilm*, 200.

9. Cf .Ibid., 202.

10. Al-Raghib al-Isfahani, *Mufradat Alfaz al-Quran* (Beirut: Dar al-Shamiyya, 1383/1964), 249.

11. Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i, *al-Mizan fi-Tafsir al-Quran* (Beirut: al-Mu'assasa al-'Alami, 1383/1964) II, 395.

12. Ala uddin al-Mattagi al-Hindi, *Kanz al-Ummah fi Sunan al-Aqwal wa'l-Af'al* (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risalah, 1383/1981), hadith no. 5873.

13. Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali, *Risalat al-Radd 'ala al-Laduniyya*, ed. 'Abd Allah Riyad Mustafa, (Damascus: Dar al-Hikma, 1986), 241.

14. CE Ahmad Fu'ad al-Ahwani, *al-Tarbiyah fi'l-Islam* (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif bi-Misr, 1968), 227-228.

15. Cf. Aziz al-Azmeh, *Arabic Thought and Islamic Societies* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 109.

16. Cf. Diane F. Halpern, *Thought and Knowledge: An Introduction to Critical Thinking* (Mahwah: New Jersey, Lawrence Erlbaum and Associates, 1996), 21.

17. Cf. Ibrahim B. Syed, "Critical Thinking" as online at http://www.lrfi. org/articles/articles_101_150/critical_thinking.htm.

(18. Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Lahore: Shah Muhammad Ashraf, reprint 1982), 127.

19. Malik Bin Nabi, *Intaj al-Mustashriqin* (Cairo: Maktabah 'Amir, 1990), 34.

20. Iqbal, op. cit., 139.

21. See for details Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, *What's Right with Islam is What's*

Right with America (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2004), 4-5.

22. Georg W. H. Hegel, *Philosophy of History* (New York: Dove Books, 1956), 109.

23. Louay Safi, "The Creative Mission of the Muslim Minorities in the West: Synthesizing the Ethos of Islam and modernity," a conference paper presented at Westminster University, London, England February 21, 2004: http://insight.org/articles/Current/MuslimMinorities.htm.

24. Cf., M.H. Kamali, "Islam, Rationality and Science," in Islam and Science, vol. 1, no. 2 (2003), 126f, see also Mehdi Golshani, "Philosophy of Science from the Qur'anic Perspective," in *Towards Islamisation of Disciplines* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1989), 73f.

25. Cf. Ishfaq Ahmad, "Research and Development Culture in the Islamic World: Past and Present Problems and Future Directions," in Abu Bakr Abdul Majeed et al. (eds.) *New Knowledge, Research and Development in the Muslim World* (Kuala Lumpur: Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia, 2004), 14-15.

26. See for a discussion Oliver Leaman, "Institutionalising Research and Development Culture in the Islamic and Non-Islamic World: A Comparative Perspective," in Abu Bakr Majeed, (ed.) *New Knowledge*, 50-51.

27. Malik bin Nabi, *Intaj al-Mustashriqin*, 26.

28. See for details Mohammad Hashim Kamali, "Issues in the Understanding of Jihad and Ijtihad" in *Islamic Studies* 41 (2002), 623 ff.

29. There is a chapter on *ijtihad* in M. H. Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1991, 3rd edn. 2003). See also my article "Issues in the Understanding of Jihad and Ijtihad" in *Islamic Studies*, 41 (2002), 617-635; and "Issues in the Legal Theory and Usul and Prospects for Reform" in *Islamic Studies*, 40 (2001), 1-21.

30. Sergio Moravia. *The Enigma of the Mind: The Mind-Body Problem in Contemporary Thought*, tr. S. Staton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. First published in Rome, 1986), 4-5.

31. See for example, Howard Gardner, *Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligence for the 21st Century* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

32. See for details Roger Garudy, "The Balance Sheet of Western Philosophy in this Century" in *Towards Islamisation of Disciplines* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1989), 399f.

33. Mehdi Golshani, "From Knowledge to Wisdom: A Qur'anic Perspective," in *Islamic Studies*, 44 (2005), 13.

34. Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Fiqh al-Awlawiyyat*, 68.

35. Cf., Al-Ahwani, *al-Tarbiyah fi'l-Islam*, 189.

36. Mohammad Hashim Kamali is Professor of Islamic Law and jurisprudence at the International Islamic University Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur. "Reading the Signs," Center for Islam and Science. Gale Group, 2006.

NOTES TO THE TEXT AND EPILOGUE

TEXT

1. See the Introduction to this text.

EPILOGUE

1. Ibn Hisham, p. 288; Tabari, i. 1211; Ibn Saad, p 147)

3. Ibn Hisham, p 291.

4. Ibn Saad, p. 148; Ibn Hisham, p. 289. Ibn Ishaq says Muhammad sent Musab of his own accord.

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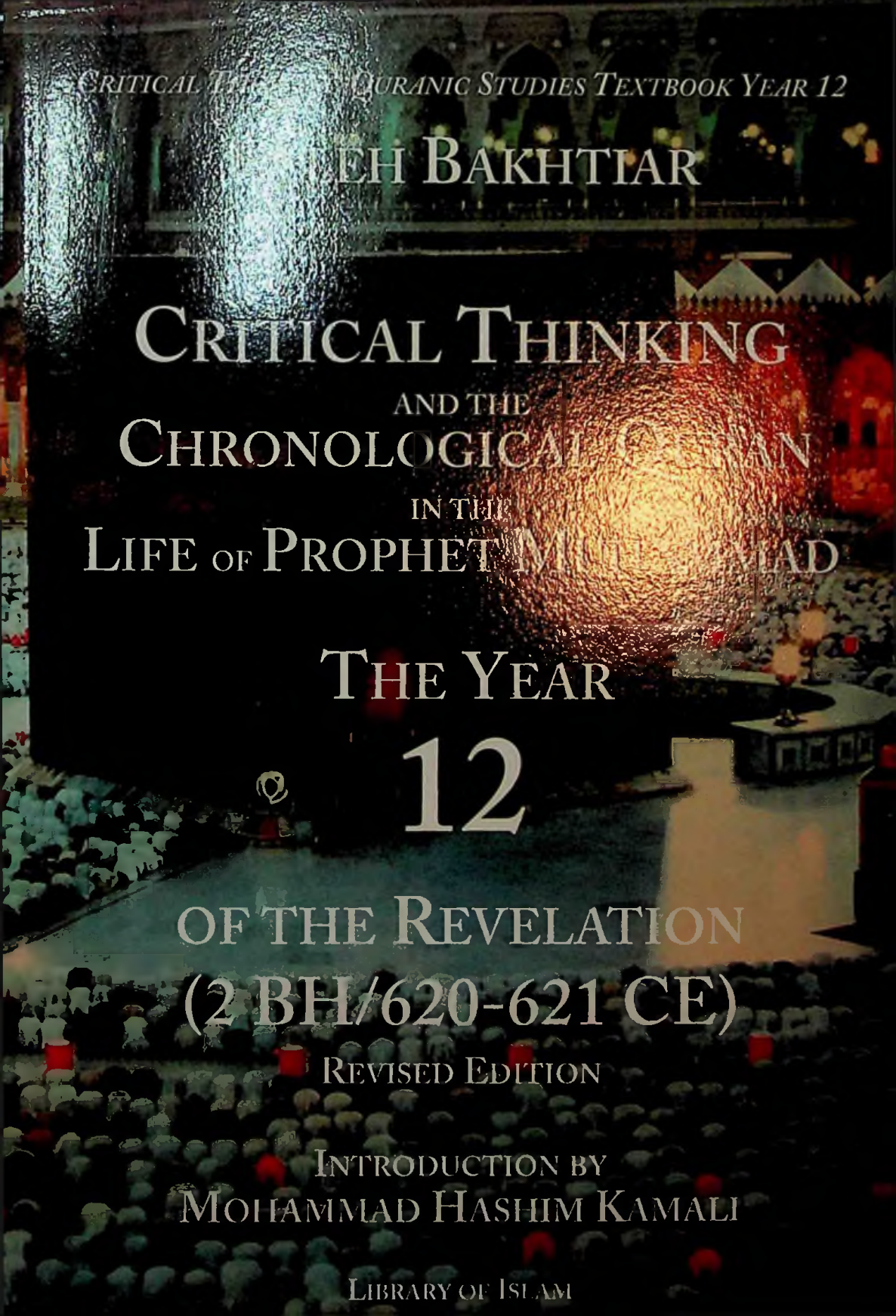
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eh Bakhtiar

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Critical Thinking and the Chronological Quran in the Life of Prophet Muhammad

The Year 12 of the Revelation (2 BH/620-621 CE)

Revised Edition

Laleh Bakhtiar

Introduction by
Mohammad Hashim Kamali

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PREFACE

THE CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STUDIES TEXTBOOK SERIES

There are thirty books in this series. Books entitled *Book Year 1* to *Book Year 24* consist of one book for each year of the revelation. The chapters' or sections' signs (*ayat*) are presented according to the 558 *ruku* or sections of the 114 chapters of the Quran. They each include the relevant chapter (*surah*) or chapters (when they are short) or sections, *ruku* (when there are multiple sections in a particular chapter) in chronological order. The chapters are numbered according to the chronological order of the Quranic chapters provided by al-Azhar University as the officially accepted order of revelation. Each section (*ruku*) is followed by a commentary by one of the well-known commentators.

Book Year 12, the present volume, covers events from Muharram 1-Dhu al-Hijja 30, 2 BH/ca. August 6, 620 CE-July 26, 621 CE.

Books 25-28 are devoted to the Quranic stories of all other Prophets and Messengers in order of their dates. *Book 25: Adam, Cain and Abel, Enoch (Idris), Noah, Hud and the People of Aad; Saleh and the People of Thamud; Book 26: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Jacob (Israel), Joseph and Job; Book 27: Moses, Aaron, Children of Jacob (Israel), Jethro (Shuayb), Joshua, Khidr and Samuel; Book 28: David, Solomon, Elijah (Ilyas), Elisha (Alyasa), Jonah (Younis), Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl), Ezra (Uzayr), Dhul Qarnayn (Cyrus the Great or Alexander the Great), Luqman, Zechariah, John the Baptist (Yahya), Mary and Jesus.* The last two are: *Book 29: The Life of Prophet Muhammad from Birth to the Revelation* and *Book 30: Teacher's Manual.* The last, *Book 30,* has been prepared for the teacher's Lesson Plans.

At the beginning of each lesson, there is an exercise in critical thinking skills. These consist of one of the following: **The Nine Intellectual Standards, The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** and **The Seven Moral Traits**. The Eight Elements contain thirty-five strategies. However there is no specific order as to how they should be learned and incorporated into our thinking process.

Once we understand the critical thinking skills and then apply them to the signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. Once the skills as presented in the Quranic message are put into practice with the grace of God, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behavior.

Each lesson is followed by questions for classroom discussion or for dialogue. At the end of each lesson there is an assessment/assignment for students to use while they are developing critical thinking skills as they hopefully learn HOW the Quran teaches critical thinking.

SOURCES

The sources for the history include the works of Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hashim, Waqidi, Ibn Sad and commentaries by Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn, Tustari and Sayyid Qutb. The sources for the commentaries of Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn and Tustari have been used with the permission of the publisher, the Royal Institute of Ahl al-Bayt in Jordan. They are available on their website www.altafsir.com.

The inclusion of excerpted commentaries (tafsir) by Sayyid Qutb's In the Shade of the Quran (available online) in this Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series is because Sayyid Qutb is considered by some extremist groups as their intellectual source. By including excerpts from his eighteen volume Quranic commentary, extremists cannot disclaim the importance of learning critical thinking as this series is to help young adults learn HOW to think using self-realization (tahqiq) and critical thinking (furqan) skills taught by the Quran. This in order to arm young adults with the ability to choose reason over any irrational extremist ideology that is presented to them.

TERMINOLOGY

All Quranic signs are translations from The Sublime Quran. For the Muslim, the Quran is the Word (Logos) of God. It is this Word of God that has inspired artists, artisans, poets, philosophers and writers, those who had been the exponents of Islamic culture and civilization for almost 1500 years. Yesterday and today's Muslim wants to know more about each Word that God chose for His revelation through the Quran. This realization, in turn, prompted the translation of The Sublime Quran, an attempt to give the sense of unity within the revelation to a non-Arabic speaking reader.

There are several points to note about the terminology used in the translation of the Quranic text and the commentaries.

1. The blessed Prophet did not bring a new religion; he came to confirm what was right in the messages of the previous Prophets. Does this translation speak to the universality of the Quran? The Quran tells the Prophet, the mercy to all of humanity, to speak to people in their own language. Following his example, in addition to the translation being unbounded by time, in several sensitive cases, the word chosen to translate an Arabic word is also of a universal or inclusive rather than a particular or exclusive nature. This adds to the broadening of the perspective and scope of the Quran so that it becomes inclusive rather than exclusive to one particular group of people. In other words, in this way a larger audience can relate to its message.

2. The actual word "Islam" comes from the verb, "to submit" (*aslama*), submission (*sallama*), and ones who submit (*muslimun*). The Quran refers to itself (the Quran) from the very beginning of the revelation (68:35).

3. As previously indicated, the four books (Book 25, Book 26, Book 27 and Book 28) are the stories of the other Prophets and Messengers mentioned in the Quran. While these stories do have lessons to be learned by the Prophet

and those who heard the revelations as well as for us today, they do not refer directly to Prophet Muhammad and his prophethood following the beginning of the revelation. What remains in these books of the Quranic signs in the 24 years of the chronological Quran relate directly to him, what he did and what he was told to say. This allows us to understand his life directly from the Quranic message, the Quranic Sunnah, without any interruption of the stories about previous Prophets and Messengers.

4. Most English translations of the Quran refer to the "Children of Israel." The word "Israel" when used in the Quran refers to Jacob, the patriarch of the children who followed him such as Joseph. Therefore, it should be the "Children of Jacob" as it appears in these texts.

5. The words "*kufr*" and "*kafir*" have been translated here as "ingratitude" and "ungrateful" where the context allows. This is the first meaning of the word and many of us in our lifetime have met Muslims who are "ungrateful." It is the ungrateful Muslims who practice intolerance by declaring anyone who says: Peace be upon you (*as-salam alaykum*) as a non-believer (with what is called *takfir*). In those cases, it would not be suitable to call them "unbelievers" or "infidels," but it is clearly appropriate to refer to them as being "ungrateful" and this would include the early Quraysh, ungrateful for God's revelation and prophethood of Muhammad, who ridiculed the Prophet and fought against the Quranic message of love, forgiveness and peace.

6. Yet another example of the use of inclusive language in an attempt to speak to people in their own language, is the use of God instead of Allah. Many English speaking Muslims, as well as many of the English translations of the Quran to date, use Allah when speaking English instead of God. The intention on the part of the speaker is to maintain a sense of piety. They feel that using Allah in English moves them in that direction. Many even claim that the word Allah cannot be translated.

However well-intentioned a person may be, when speaking English, the use of the word Allah instead of God, first of all, does not follow the Quranic verse that tells the Prophet to speak to people in their own language. Subsequently, it does not follow the Sunnah of the Prophet who did speak to people in their own language.

In addition, it creates a divide between Muslims who use the word and the English speaking people of various faiths to whom they are speaking. In effect, it creates the illusion that there is more than One God—Allah and God. The response of the English speaking person of another faith is to say: I do not understand your religion; you have a different God than I do and you call Him Allah.

It needs to be clearly explained to English speaking Muslims that, unlike what they may feel, they do not have a monopoly on the word Allah. Arabic speaking Christians and Arabic speaking Jews also refer to God as Allah. The Old Testament and New Testament, when translated into Arabic, use Allah for God.

English speaking Muslims, therefore, need to recall the message of the Quran that God is One (tawhid). In addition, the Prophet did not bring a new religion but confirmed what was correct in the messages of previous Prophets, namely, that God is One. Finally, they need to follow the example of the Prophet, as the Quran says he is the model or example to be followed, by speaking to people in their own language.

7. The Arabic language, much like old English, has the second person singular (masculine: anta (where the verb ends in *ka*). The English equivalent is the subject: "thou" or the object: "thee" or the possessive: "thy." As these are no longer in common usage in English, wherever the original Arabic uses one of these terms, the word "**you**" or "**your**" appear in bold font so that the reader knows the original was the second person singular. When the Quran is speaking directly to the Prophet, it uses the pronoun "thee" or "thou" so it is an important distinction to make.

Using you (second person plural) is done to help English speaking readers, recognizing that using the second person plural pronoun you (masculine: *antum* where the verb ends in masculine: *kum*) for God is to intimate that God is plural, the only sin in the Quran that is unforgivable. By putting the pronoun **you** in bold font indicates the true intention.

8. For the Arabic word "ayah," the English word used in these texts is "sign" rather than the Biblical term, "verse."

9. Several of the signs were abrogated over time. However the indication of a sign being abrogated was done after the complete revelation of the Quran. Whether or not a sign was later abrogated does not change the fact that the first Muslims who listened to the Quran, heard the signs that may have later been said to have been abrogated and that a hafez of the Quran recites all the signs as they appear in the original Arabic revealed to the Prophet. Whatever signs scholars later determined to be abrogated are still part of the Quran and, therefore, are not relevant to learning to be a Quranic critical thinker, learning HOW to think.

10. The first number that appears when the Quranic Chapters begin refers to the chapter number in the chronological order of the revelation so that Quranic Chapter 110 which was the last to be revealed is number 114 in the chronological order.

11. It is to be noted that whenever the name of Muhammad, Prophet Muhammad or the Prophet are used, one may say a silent prayer of blessings for him.

CRITICAL THINKING• COMPONENT

Quranic critical thinking (furqan, discernment) is a process that analyzes how we think. It is a 3-step process: **I**: Quranic critical thinkers apply the **Nine Intellectual Standards** (logic, being definitive, connected, appropriate, have worthiness, include numerous viewpoints, have right judgment, clarity, being fair and just) to: **II**: **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** (point of view, purpose, questions, information, inferences, concepts, assumptions, im-

plications): in order to develop: **III: The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** (belief in One God (tawhid), God-consciousness (taqwa), virtuous conduct (birr) or integrity through moral discipline, empowering constancy ('azm) and courage, persevering in goodness (sabara), love (hubb) or empathic altruism (ihsan) and being fair and just (rashad). The signs (ayat) in each section (ruku) teach any or every one of the **Nine Intellectual Standards** or any and every one of the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or any or every one of the **Seven Quranic Moral Traits.**

This is the key to critical thinking. We do not learn "what" to think, but, rather, "how" to think. Using the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** as an example, critical thinking can be summarized in the following sentence: Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** and consequences. We use **concepts,** ideas and theories to **interpret information** (data, facts and experiences) in order to **answer questions,** solve problems, and resolve issues.

The point of view in all cases is that of the Quranic message and the various individuals and groups that it addresses as this series is a course in Quranic Studies as well as a course in the chronological history of the life of the blessed Prophet (sira). Each student is encouraged to come up with his or her own questions and responses to those questions in order to learn how to become the Quranic critical thinker as the Quranic teaches us HOW to think.

It is important to note that there is no correct or incorrect answer. The important point is to go through the process with as many of the sections as one is able to do. Little by little, this will help each student or reader to develop into critical thinkers or "discerners" of the Quranic message creating a bond between them and the Quranic message.

Once we learn to analyze signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. It is important to note that the order of **The Nine Intellectual Standards** or **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or **The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** is not important. With the grace of God, once all are present, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behaviors.

THE NINE INTELLECTUAL STANDARDS

1. LOGIC (REASONABLE: 'AQALA, 'AQL)
2. DEFINITIVENESS (TO BE PRECISE: MUHKAMA)
3. CONNECTEDNESS (CONTAINING COMPLEXITIES AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS: (MUQTARIN)
4. APPROPRIATENESS (TO MAKE RELEVANT: SADID)
5. WORTHINESS (FOCUSING ON THE IMPORTANT, NOT TRIVIAL,

to be significant: ahl)
6. Numerous or Multiple Viewpoints: 'dhara'a)
7. Right Judgment (rushd)
8. Clarity (understandable, to be clear: tabayyana)
9. Being Fair and Just ('aql, right-minded (rashad))

The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies

1. **Embodying a Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective (recollect, bear in mind, take for granted: tadhakkur)**
   - Thinking Independently
   - Developing Insight Into Ego-centricity or Socio-centricity
   - Exploring Thoughts Underlying Feelings and Feelings Underlying Thoughts
   - Developing Intellectual Curiosity
2. **Generating a Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective: (consider: ra'a)**
   - Clarifying Issues or Conclusions
   - Clarifying and Analyzing the Meanings of Words or Phrases
   - Reading Critically: Clarifying or Discerning the Sacred Text
   - Listening Critically: The Art of Silent Dialogue
3. **Raising Questions, Problems, Issues: (reflect: tafakkara)**
   - Practicing Discussion: Clarifying and Questioning Interpretations
   - Reasoning Dialogically: Comparing Interpretations
   - Reasoning Dialectically: Evaluating Interpretations Knowledge, Wisdom
   - Deep Questioning
4. **Using Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments (evidence: basirah)**
   - Developing Criteria for Evaluation: Clarifying Values and Standards
   - Analyzing or Evaluating Actions
   - Distinguishing Relevant From Irrelevant Information
   - Giving Reasons and Evaluating Evidence
5. **Making Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusion, Solutions (understanding: tabassur)**
   - Analyzing or Evaluating Arguments and Interpretations
   - Making Plausible Inferences or Interpretations
   - Recognizing Contradictions
   - Noting Significant Similarities and Differences
6. **Utilizing Concepts, Definitions, Principles, Models and Vocabulary (recall: idhdhakara)**
   - Comparing Analogous Situations: Reframing Insights to New Contexts

DEVELOPING ONE'S PERSPECTIVE: CREATING OR EXPLORING ARGUMENTS
MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS
COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE
THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING
7. MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PREPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED (OPINIONS: ZUNUN)
8. GENERATING IMPLICATIONS, CONSEQUENCES (PONDER, EVALUATE: TADABBUR)
GENERATING OR ASSESSING SOLUTIONS
EXPLORING IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES IN DETAIL

1. Embodying a **Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective** (Recollect, Bear in Mind, Take to Heart (*tadhakkur*)):Whenever we think, we think within a point of view. What is the Quranic point of view in these signs? Does the Quran follow universal intellectual values of clarity, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, logic, fairness?

2. Generating a **Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective** (Consider (*ra'a*)): My purpose in addressing the Quranic purpose in these signs is . . .? Know exactly what you are after. Make sure you are not operating with a hidden agenda and that your announced and real purposes are the same. Whenever we think, we think for a purpose. What is the Quran's fundamental purpose in revealing these signs? Are there multiple points of view?

3. Raising **Questions, Problems, Issues** (Reflect (*tafakkara*)): What is the key question I am trying to answer. State the question as clearly and precisely as you can. Details are very important.

4. Using **Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments** (Evidence (*basirah*)): Actively seek the information most relevant to the question. Include in that information options for action, both short-term and long-term. We use experiences, facts and data that the Quran gives us. What information does the Quran give in these signs? What information do I need to answer my question?

5. Making **Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusions, Solutions** (Understanding (*tabassur*)): After reasoning (discerning) the above points, decide what the best answer (conclusion) to the question is. What inferences, judgments or conclusions do these signs make? What are my most fundamental inferences or conclusions based on these Quranic signs?

6. Utilizing **Concepts, Theories, Definitions, Axioms, Laws, Prin-**

ciples, Models, Vocabulary (Recall (*idhdhakara*)): The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are ... ? Figure out all significant ideas needed to understand and answer your question. You may need to analyze these concepts. Use a good dictionary. Inferences or conclusions are based on Quranic concepts and theories. What is the most basic concept in my question? What Quranic terms have I learned?

7. Making **Assumptions, Presuppositions, Taking for Granted** (Opinions (*zunun*)): Some important assumptions I am using in my thinking are ... ? Figure out what you are taking for granted. Watch out for self-serving or unjustified assumptions. The Quranic point of view is based on some assumptions. What assumptions is the Quran using in its reasoning? What assumptions am I using in my reasoning from the Quranic revelation?

8. Generating **Implications, Consequences** (Ponder (*tadabbur*)): Evaluate options. Take into account the advantages and disadvantages of possible decisions before acting? What consequences are likely to follow from this or that decision? The Quranic assumptions and my assumptions lead to implications and consequences. What are the implications of the Quranic reasoning? What are the implications of my reasoning? Am I correct in understanding the Quranic implications?

THE SEVEN QURANIC MORAL TRAITS

1. BELIEF IN ONE GOD (TAWHID)
2. GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (TAQWA)
3. VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE (MORALLY OBLIGATED: QANATA, GOODNESS, BIRR)
4. EMPOWERING CONSTANCY, COURAGE (AZM)
5. PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS (STEADFAST: SABARA)
6. EMPATHIC ALTRUISM (LOVE, MERCY, COMPASSION: HUBB)
7. FAIRNESS (NOT SELF-SERVING OR EGO-CENTRIC: 'AQSATA)

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Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

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My gratitude also goes to the Center for Critical Thinking and, particularly, the online work done in youtube videos and other works by the educator-founders-members of the Critical Thinking Community, namely, the late Dr. Richard Paul and his wife and constant collaborator, Dr. Linda Elder. All indications of • throughout the text refers to quotes or paraphrases from their excellent work as part of the Critical Thinking Community, www.criticalthinking.org. My attempt has been for all the quotes and paraphrases used here to follow fair copyright use.

Whereas Drs. Paul and Elder may not have used their work in religious educational settings, due to the separation of church and state in the educating of American students, learning from their works it became clear that their teachings can help Muslim students, as well, if their method is presented through the content of the Quran. If Muslim students come to understand that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking, that is, discernment (furqan), HOW to think, they will be armed with the intellectual skills they need to confront Islamic extremism.

One of the main scholars that Islamic extremists use in their propaganda is Seyyed Qutb. In order to further arm Muslim students for any confrontation they may have with Islamic extremists who would quote that their ideas come from Seyyed Qutb, I have used his Quranic commentary, In the Shade of the Quran, in Chapter I of this work. Students will learn how, contrary to what they may be told or taught, in many cases, Seyyed Qutb's commentary (indicated by °) speaks of and describes the way that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking and Islamic extremists cannot say that I have left out their scholars.

Last, but certainly not least, I wish to thank Kazi Publications and its founder, Liaquat Ali, for his constant support and encouragement to forge new areas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqli*) will be passed to young students as they learn of a Muslim world deeply entrenched in Islamic narrative sciences (*al-naqli*).

INTRODUCTION

READING THE SIGNS: A QURANIC PERSPECTIVE ON THINKING

BY MOHAMMAD HASHIM KAMALI

The Islamic notion of *aql* (intellect) embraces the faith dimension of knowledge that is also informed by ethical values. The prevailing reading of the Quran on rationality consists of a coalition of faith and reason which is also cognizant of the metaphysical aspect of reality and the limits, therefore, of human reason. This may be said to be a dividing line between the Islamic and Western conceptions of rationality, especially in its post-Enlightenment context.

Thus, it is not accurate to draw a direct parallel between them, as was the case in the Islamic discourse of the colonial period wherein many Muslim writers greatly admired the Western conception of rationality. The twentieth century islamic discourse has shown awareness of that difference as it began to comprehend the subtleties inherent in the Western lexicon on rationality and its cultural overtones.[1]

THE DIVINE SIGNS (*AYAT*)

The Quran teaches an essential doctrine of the *ayat* (God's signs in the universe) functioning as pointers to the providential purpose at all levels of creation. Thus the Quran makes frequent references such as 'signs for a people who understand—exercise their intellect'. This evidential role of the divine signs entails an accompanying demand placed upon humans to engage in a rational understanding of the signs and draw conclusions on the discovery of truth and correct guidance.

The human reception of the signs, thus, depends ultimately upon the integrity of reason, without which humans would be incapable neither of comprehending the signs nor of responding to their message. The more abundant is an individual's native endowment of reason, the greater is the possibility for him or her to attain a larger magnitude of understanding and a higher level of response.

The nexus between faith and reason thus constitutes the hallmark of intelligent Islamic spirituality, wherein human intellect and emotions are guided toward harmony with one another. The Quran repeatedly provokes its reciters to think about the signs of God in the universe and within themselves, to understand God's illustrious presence in them, and ultimately to vindicate the truth. The word *ayah* and its plural *ayat* occur in the Quran over 400 times, although the whole of the Quran introduces itself as a collection of *ayat*. To quote the Quran: *We will cause them to see Our signs on the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is The Truth.* (41:53) And, *On the earth are signs, for the ones that are certain and in yourselves.*

Will you not, then, perceive? (51:20-51:21)

God reveals the truth in a variety of ways, some explicit and others by allusion, the latter mainly through the modality of the signs, in order to provoke and engage the human intellect. The signs of God cannot be readjust off the face of the signs but require thinking and reflection. This is indicated in the phrase: *We will cause them to see Our signs* ... which suggests that the signs may not be instantaneously visible to the naked eye. The whole concept of signs seeks to forge a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* (38:29) A sign is also a portent and allusion to something other than itself and should not therefore be seen as the final message and purpose of the revelation containing it.

Approximately 750 verses, or nearly one-eighth of the Quran, exhort the readers to study nature, history, the Quran itself, and humanity at large. The text of the Quran employs a range of expressions in its appeal to those who listen (*yasma'un*), those who think (*yatafakkarun*), those who reflect (*yatadabbarun*), those who observe (*yanzurun*), those who exercise their intellect (*ya'qilun*), those who take heed and remember (*yatadhakkarun*), those who ask questions (*yas'alun*), those who develop an insight (*yatafaqqahun*), and those who know (*ya'lamun*).[2]

These and their derivatives (mostly occurring in the active verbal form) consist essentially of open invocations and encouragement to thinking that is not limited by a methodology or framework. *Meditate they not, then, on the Quran* (*afala yatadabbarun al-Qur'an*) (47:24) *Tadabbur* means concentrated and goal-oriented thinking provoked by the challenge to find something new or to solve a difficult problem.

Quranic references to thinking and the exercise of intellect occur in conjunction with basically five major themes: Belief in the Oneness and generosity of God (*tawhid*); reflection on the Quran; the human being and the universe; historical precedent; and thinking itself.

References to *aql* (intellect) and its derivatives occur on 49 occasions in the text. The typical Quranic expression, *ulu'l-albab* (those who possess vision and understanding), and its synonym, *ulu'l-nuha* (people endowed with intellectual abilities) occur 33 times in the text. Such expressions are frequently juxtaposed with the exposition of signs, such as in the sign: *Thus, God makes manifest His signs to you so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (2:242) or in the sign: *Surely, We made manifest the signs to you so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (57:17). Repeated references to pondering over the signs are variously nuanced such that they embrace within their fold the widest spectrum of people who may be endowed with different intellectual abilities and endowments.[3]

Al-Isfahani defines thought (*al-fikr*) as the power of the mind that facilitates access to knowledge (*'ilm*). Thinking (*al-tafakkur*) is the movement of

that power which is driven by the intellect (*al-'aql*), and this can only occur when an initial image of the subject is attainable in the mind of the thinker. Thinking cannot, therefore, proceed over something of which no image exists in the mind. This can be said of the self of God, for example, as we have no image on which to focus our thought.[4]

The human being can only think over the attributes of God through the observation of His signs. Broadly speaking, thinking proceeds over the whole of the created universe without any exception; indeed, the Quran repeatedly invites such in respect to both the physical and abstract aspects of reality, both in the present and in regards to bygone history that is only perceived by the intellect rather than sense perception. Often the Quran gives examples, parables, and narratives of other nations, and then follows them with the reminder, usually addressed to the Prophet, to recount the narratives of the past so that the people may think and reflect over them:

And recount to them the tiding of him to whom We gave Our signs. (7:175)

And there are the parables that We propound for humanity so that perhaps they will reflect. (59:21)

Truly, in that are certainly signs for a folk who reflect. (30:21)

A hierarchy of five perceptive-cognitive functions is also suggested, including and extending through hearing, sight, thinking, dhikr remembrance, and certainty.[5]

Given such a scale of intensified perceptive understanding, the Quran propounds the notion of *ulul'l-albab*, the thoughtful individuals who are possessed of proper understanding and response. *'Aql* is thus tied to the cognitive dimension of faith.

Significantly, the very term for reason and intelligence in Arabic, *al-'aql*, has at the core of its basic meaning the practical idea of "restraining" and "binding," that is, of holding one's self back from blameworthy conduct—being an interior self-imposed limit. Quranic commentators understand thinking (*tafakkur, tafkir*) as pondering and reflection, which is a mental activity and process, not an outcome.

Thinking (*tafakkur*) is considered as a form of worship of God if it is done with sincerity and good purpose. *'Aql* in its Quranic conception is also one that conceives the truth, and it is always in search of it. This conception of *'aql* precludes one that is rigid, arrogant, and misleading. Some have also drawn the conclusion from the ubiquitous Quranic emphasis on thinking that all Muslims must strive to be thinking individuals.[6]

Al-Qaradawi has quoted Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's (d. 751/1350) own observation as well as some epithetic statements, the latter narrated from other leading figures to the effect that "thinking for an hour is better than worship of many years," and another statement that "thinking for an hour is superior to a whole night of prayer." To this Ibn Qayyim added that "thinking is the act of the heart whereas worship is the act of one's limbs, and the former is

superior to the latter."

The pious caliph Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz (d. 101/718) is similarly quoted: Thinking over the bounties of God is the best form of worship. Abbas Mahmud al-Aqqad went so far as to say that: Thinking—*al-tafkir*—is an Islamic obligation. Just as God Most High ordered us to worship Him by performing prayer and fasting, He also ordered us to think in numerous verses and in so many different ways, all of which vindicate thinking as one of the cardinal messages of the Quran.[7]

The Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge espoused with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression *al-tafaqquh fi'l-din*, that is, understands the religion, signifying a rational and inquisitive approach to constructing a Quranic worldview.

Islam, in other words, advises analytical knowledge and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely dogmatic approach. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions: Faith based on detailed analysis (*al-iman al-tafsili*) as opposed to undigested and uncomprehended faith (*al-iman al-ijmali*). The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the religious scholars of all the leading schools of thought. Thus it is declared in a sign: *But a section of people only that they become learned in the way of life and that they warn their folk.* (9:122).

We also note the distinction between thought-based knowledge and transmitted or received knowledge reflected in the twin juristic and hadith-related expressions of knowledge based on understanding (*'ilm al-diraya*), and report-based and transmitted knowledge (*'ilm al-riwaya*). The former is based on understanding and insight (*diraya wa tafaqquh*) and takes priority over the latter. Whereas *'ilm al-riwaya* relies mainly on memory and retention, *'ilm al-diraya* is based on cognition, understanding, and analysis.

Thus, if there are hadith reports, or any factual reports for that matter, which do not stand to reason and understanding, they would be most likely discounted and abandoned, with the exception only of devotional matters (*'ibadat*) which are based on faith and submission more than on rational analysis.

Another feature of the Quranic vision of thinking is indicated in its emphasis on wisdom and good judgment (*hikmah*) which signifies the quality of thinking, its regard for values, and its outcome. Wisdom and good judgment can easily be said to be more important than technical know-how and expertise, as it can guide expert knowledge as to its proper application and the attainment of excellence.

The Quran mentions *hikmah* twenty times, and in about ten of these it is immediately preceded by the word Book or *kitab*, which is a reference to di-

vine scripture—primarily the Quran, but also other divinely revealed scriptures. The text, thus, says with reference to Jesus: *And He teaches him the Book and wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel.* (3:48) The juxtaposition of *kitab* and *hikmah* is often contextualized by a reference to the sending of prophets who teach the people and guide them with scripture and wisdom (e.g., *wa yu'allimuhum al-kitaba wa'l-hikmata*) as it is said of the Prophet Muhammad: *And teaches you the Book and wisdom* (2:159) and: *Teaches them the Book and wisdom* (62:2 ff); the descendants of Prophet Abraham: *We gave the people of Abraham the Book and wisdom* (4:54); and of Luqman: *We gave Luqman wisdom* (31:12). The holistic, superior, and indivisible value of *hikmah* in the Quran is underscored in one of its signs to the effect that when God bestows wisdom on someone that person is indeed granted an immense source of goodness: *And whomever is given wisdom, then, surely, was given much good and none recollects no doubt but those imbued with intuition.* (2:269).

To mention *hikmah* together with the Book evidently means that the Quran should be read with wisdom and divorcing the one from the other by taking a totally dogmatic approach to the Quran goes against the divine purpose and intention of its revelation. To read the Quran in the light of *hikmah* thus means a comprehensive reading that reaches beyond the obvious meaning of its words to encapsulate the goal and purpose of its message and then also reflection on the ways and means of how its benefits can be realized for the individual and society.[8]

The repeated juxtaposition of the "Book and *Hikmah*" in the Quran led some commentators, such as the Successor, Qatadah ibn Diama al-Sadusi (d.118 H), Ibn Wahhab, the disciple of Imam Malik (d. 179/795), and the Imam al-Shafii (d. 205/820) himself to the somewhat unusual observation that "*hikmah*" is a reference to the Sunna of the Prophet. Many have taken and followed this view; but since the text does not specify such a meaning for *hikmah*, the word should convey its natural and unqualified meaning as I have depicted in this presentation.

Good judgment, insight, balance and avoidance of extremes, the ability to distinguish between truth and falsehood, and procedural accuracy are commonly associated with *hikmah* and *hikmah* as such becomes a dimension of evaluative thinking in. its Quranic idiom. Besides, when the Quran declares that God Most High endowed the Prophets David and Solomon and also the renowned sage Luqman with *hikmah*, it could not have referred to the Sunna of the Prophet Muhammad, as Sunna as such did not exist in those times.

The Quranic usage of *hikmah* reinforces the holistic quality of thinking. *Hikmah* also seeks to forge a close tie between reason and emotion (*'aql wa qalb*) thereby encouraging what is now known as emotional intelligence. This is how the Quran and also the Sunna often deliver their messages, for, unlike the modern statutory laws and texts, the Quranic guidance, commands, and

prohibitions are often espoused with appeals to the heart and mind of their readers.[9]

Al-Isfahani defined *hikmah* as the realization of the truth through knowledge and intellect and it is manifested in the performance of benevolent deeds.[10] According to another definition: Wisdom signifies comprehension of the truth and reality and the ability to avoid corruption in one's quest to attain perfection."[11]

Random House Dictionary of the English Language similarly defines wisdom as: Knowledge of what is true or right coupled with just judgment as to action. Wisdom is thinking informed by the light of the heart that often leads to action and contemplates its consequences in relationship with other relevant factors. This may strike a note with the renowned hadith in which it is declared that: Fearing God is the pinnacle of wisdom (*ra's al-hikmati makhafat Allah*)."[12]

It is presumably for this reason that the great religions of the world have urged the seekers of knowledge to combine it with wisdom. It is wisdom that confers a higher quality on thinking and helps knowledge to be used for the promotion of good giving it meaning and direction.

In an effort to train the individual to enhance his or her quality of thinking, al-Ghazali (d. 505/1111) discusses the two sources of knowledge that Muslim tradition has recognized. One of these is through human teaching and learning (*al-ta'allum al-insani*) and the other through divine teaching (*al-ta'lim al-rabbani*).

The former is externally transmitted from teacher to student, whereas the latter is conveyed by the Universal Intellect which is superior, more intense, and more effective than human teaching. This knowledge is internally acquired either through revelation (*wahy*), which is a prerogative of the Prophets, or it is acquired through meditation, thinking, and reflection.

Al-Ghazali subscribes to the view that the essence of all knowledge is centered in the inner self of the human person in much the same way as growth potential that is vested in the soil and seed, and it is through teaching that the individual's potential is developed.[13] These two aspects of knowledge, that is, the external and the internal, are complementary to one another. This is because no one can possibly teach or learn from any teacher all the sciences, some of which are learned through teaching but the rest inferred by the reflective thought of the individual. It is therefore important that the avenues of learning remain open both through teaching and through inner reflection, thinking, and illumination. This is another way of saying that all knowledge is acquired and developed through the senses, inner reflection and thinking, both of which partake in natural endowment and development through external transmission and teaching.

Al-Ghazali's views on the internal and external sources of knowledge tended to correspond with those of Ibn Sina (d. 428/1037), but which differed,

at least partially, from those of the second/ninth century Ikhwan al-Safa (c. 373/983). All knowledge, according to the latter, is acquired through the senses and none inheres in human nature. Knowledge that is developed through thought and reflection also originate in the senses. The same analysis is extended to the axiomatic knowledge of postulates that are derived and confirmed through the senses. In support of this theory Ikhwan al-Safa have cited the Quranic verse: *And God brought you out from the wombs of your mothers and you know nothing.* (16:78). All knowledge is therefore acquired knowledge, a view which may strike a closer note with some of the modern theories on the subject.[14]

Muslim thought in the middle ages did not admit the ontological distinction between tangible entities that could be sensuously apprehended and entities of a spiritual or subliminal nature. This may be said to be a more sound and realistic view of reality than is allowed for by the modern positivist doctrines of science. Being is manifested at various levels and in several forms, none of which is less real than the other. Arabic thought employed the notions systematized in Stoic theory that divide being into three locations: Verbal utterance, psychic representation, and reality—without this last in any sense having exclusive title to Being.

Al-Farabi (d. 950 CE) took up this view and assimilated psychic representation to the entities of reason. Others rehearsed this division with the addition of a fourth location, that of Scripture. Reality thus had a four-fold manifestation, depending on whether the subject existed immediately in itself or whether its like was graven in the mind (*dhihn*, psyche) composed of sounds, which together indicates the psychic representation, or was manifested in characters standing for sound and speech. All four have a basic characteristic in common which is existence (*wujud, haqiqah*).[15]

The Islamic and Western perceptions of creative and evaluative thinking both recognize this to be a skill that is developed through training and controlled exercise. It is through training and thinking that we adopt new patterns of perceiving reality that we are able to see differently and creatively. It is generally acceded that creative thinking and critical thinking go hand-in-hand and complement one another. Critical thinking means "involving or exercising skilled judgment or observation." Thinking is critical when it evaluates the reasoning behind a decision. Such evaluation must, however, be carried forth in a constructive manner.[16]

The purpose of critical thinking is to achieve understanding, evaluate viewpoints, and solve problems. In general, one's thinking is likely to become critical when concrete learning experiences precede abstract thought.[17] This strikes a parallel note, in its Islamic idiom, with thinking that is espoused with *hikmah*.

The famous yet controverted hadith: The first (being) God created is the intelligence (*awwalu ma khalaqa Allahu al-'aqla*), sparked prolonged discus-

sions among Muslim thinkers over many centuries over the implications of this statement. Among the issues debated was the priority of reason over revelation and the respective role of each in their mutual inter-dependence.

Another issue was whether the disparity among humans in respect of reason also affected the modalities of moral obligation. Some prominent thinkers including Abu Bakr al-Razi (d. 313/925) apparently advocated the primacy of reason over the revelation. This would be properly known as "rationalism," which deems the primacy of reason over revelation. This is different from "rationality" which means treating any issue by using reason without giving reason priority.

SOURCES AND INSTRUMENTS OF KNOWLEDGE

Commenting on the Quranic passage quoted earlier, Muhammad Iqbal observed that the Quran regards both self (*anfus*) and world (*afaq*) as sources of knowledge. God reveals His signs in inner as well as outer experience. The Quran thus opens fresh vistas of knowledge in the domain of our inner experience. Mystic experience and intuition, then, however unusual and abnormal, must now be regarded as perfectly natural and open to scrutiny like other aspects of human experience." But inner experience is only one source of human knowledge. The outer experience in the Quran, Iqbal continues on the same page, unfolds two other sources of knowledge—nature and history, and it is in tapping these sources of knowledge that "the spirit of Islam is seen at its best".

The Quran sees the signs of reality in the sun, the moon, the alternation of day and night, the perpetual changes of the winds, the variety of human colors and tongues, and in fact in the whole of nature as revealed to the sense-perception of man. The Muslim's duty is to reflect on these signs and not to pass by them as if he is deaf and blind *They have hearts with which they understand not. And they have eyes with which they perceive not. And they have ears with which they hear not. Those are like flocks. Nay! They are ones who go astray. Those, they are the ones who are heedless* (7:179), for he who does not see these signs in this life will remain blind to the realities of the life to come. The divine signs are observed through sense-perception using mainly the faculties of hearing, sight, and intellect: *Journey they not through the earth? Have they not hearts with which to be reasonable or ears with which to hear?* (22:46) The emphasis in this sign is on the faculty of reason and understanding, suggesting that not all of our information about nature comes directly from sensation, for if that were the case we would be no different from animals.

Frequent references to sense-perception as the principal mode of receiving the signs show the scientific/experimental import of the Quran. The Quran goes even further to suggest sense perception as the only avenue of knowledge, as the text already reviewed provides: *And God brought you out from*

the wombs of your mothers and you know nothing. And He assigned to you the ability to hear and sight and mind so that perhaps you will give thanks. (16:78) Knowledge of the signs is therefore acquired through the use of these faculties. In another sign, the Quran praises those who listen to the word and follow the best of it: *Those who listen to the saying of the Quran and follow the fairer of it. Those are those whom God guided. And those, they are imbued with intuition.* (or make the best possible interpretation thereof) (39:18). This sign apparently subjects the data of sense-perception to the exercise of intellectual selection. The text also teaches that sense-perception does not perceive all reality: *So I swear an oath by what you perceive and what you perceive not.* (69:37-69:38). Certainty (*yaqin*) may also be beyond the reach of human intellect, as the human mind may be blurred by the variables of time and space. What is deemed certain today may be uncertain tomorrow.

We also note that according to the teachings of the Quran, the universe is dynamic in its origin, finite, and capable of increase. Early Muslim thinkers do not seem to have grasped the Quranic emphasis on inductive reasoning and experimentation. It was indeed a slow realization for Muslim thinkers to note "that the spirit of the Quran was essentially anti-classical". Putting full confidence in Greek reasoning, Muslim thinkers tried to understand the Quran in the light of Greek philosophy, which in the beginning of their careers they had studied with so much enthusiasm.

The substance of Iqbal's analysis on this subject is also upheld by Malik bin Nabi (1905-1973), who understands the creative impulse of the Quran as the motivating force behind the efflorescence of science at a time when Muslim thinkers began to grasp the full impact of the Quran on experimentation and inductive reasoning.[18]

The dynamic conception of the universe in the Quran is also seen by its conception of life as an evolutionary movement in time. History thus constitutes the third source of knowledge in the Quran. It is one of the most essential teachings of the Quran, as Iqbal has further observed, that nations are collectively judged, and suffer for their misdeeds here and now. The Quran thus constantly cites historical instances, and urges upon the reader to reflect on the past and present experiences of humanity: *Customs passed away before you. So journey through the earth; then, look on how had been the Ultimate End of the ones who deny.* (3:137)

If a wound afflicts you, surely, a wound afflicted the folk similar to that. And these are the days We rotate among humanity so that God knows those who believed and takes witnesses to Himself from among you. (3:140)

And: *And of whom We created there is a community that guides with The Truth, and with it, it is just. And those who denied Our signs, We will draw them on gradually from where they will not know.* (7:181-183)

The Quran's interest in history as a source of human knowledge extends farther than mere indication of historical generalizations. "It has given us one

of the most fundamental principles of historical criticism."[19] Since accuracy in recording facts is an indispensable condition of history as a science, accuracy depends ultimately on those who report them. The reporter's personal character is thus an important factor in judging his testimony. The Quran says *O those who believed! If one who disobeys drew near to you with a tiding, then, be clear so that you not light on a folk out of ignorance.* (49:6). It is the application of the principle embodied in this sign to the reporters of the Prophet's traditions out of which were gradually evolved the canons of historical criticism.

A scientific treatment of history, however, requires a wider experience, a greater maturity of practical reason, and a fuller realization of certain basic ideas regarding the nature of life and time. These are in the main three, and taken together they constitute the foundation of Quranic teaching.

(1) The unity of human origin: The Quran states: *He creates you from one soul.* (39:6) And: *O humanity! Be God-conscious of your Lord Who created you from a single soul.* (4:1). But the perception of life as an organic unity is a slow achievement. Islam sowed the germ of this aspiration and it became a Quranic assignment of us to work towards its realization. Notwithstanding the fact that Christianity, long before Islam, brought the message of equality to humanity, the Roman Empire had no more than a general and abstract conception of human unity.

On the other hand, the growth of territorial nationalism in Europe has tended to stifle the broad human element in the art and literature of Europe. European colonialism was also inspired by a self-image of superiority. Europe assumed a superior image that non-European peoples could be freely dominated, exploited, and subjugated.[20] It was quite otherwise with Islam. The impulse of Islam was from the outset to make the idea of human unity a living factor in the Muslim experience that was to be taken towards fuller fruition.

(2) A keen sense of the reality of time, and the concept of life as a continuous movement in time: The Quranic view of the alternation of day and night as a sign of the ultimate Reality which appears in a fresh glory every moment and the tendency in Muslim metaphysics to regard time as objective—all this constituted the intellectual heritage and ideals of Islam.

(3) The merger between religious and secular values: This is a unique feature of Islamic thought which is distinguished by its attempt to bring harmony between them, probably for the first time in history. It was in the state of Madinah that we encounter a clear example where universally proclaimed moral values formed the criteria of political judgment. Political leaders and statesmen were expected to recognize not only the value of efficiency, but also of justice, human dignity, equality, and freedom. In his renowned *Philosophy of History*, Hegel (1770-1831) recognized that the unity between the secular and the spiritual took place in Islamic society and civilization long before it made any impact in the modern West: We must therefore regard (the

reconciliation between the secular and spiritual) as commencing rather in the enormous contrast between the spiritual religious principles, and the barbarian Real World. For spirit as the consciousness of an inner world is, at the commencement, itself still in the abstract form. All that is secular is consequently given over to rudeness and capricious violence. The (Muslim) principle, the enlightenment of the oriental world, is the first to contravene this barbarism and caprice. We find it developing itself later and more rapidly than Christianity; for the latter needed eight centuries to grow into a political form.[21]

The modern West followed the example of the historical Islamic world in demanding that holders of political power operate under a set of moral rules. But as the modern West harmonized the secular and religious only nationally, the international realm was free to operate under the dynamics of power politics and secular rudeness. This failure was a cause of the senseless violence that claimed over 100 million war victims in the twentieth century. Recognition of the danger of the purely secular politics led to the creation of the United Nations, yet even this effort was undermined by political realists who enjoyed a disproportionate sway among the political pundits of Europe and America.

Safi has rightly noted the irony that contemporary Muslim societies have unfortunately followed a similar course in decoupling the secular and the religious and now find themselves entangled in a crisis of legitimacy. Many Muslim regimes are driven by the logic of power and operate outside the realm of moral correctness. It is alarming to see that this decoupling has impacted the religiously inspired movements, which seem to succumb to the logic of power in their readiness to employ amoral--even immoral--strategies in their fight against political corruption and oppression.[22]

OBSTACLES TO CORRECT REASONING

The Quranic emphasis on pondering over the signs is also underscored by a set of guidelines to ensure a correct outcome of reflection and thinking over them. The text thus draws attention to a series of exclusions and factors that stand in the way of the proper functioning of intellect:

(1) Pursuit of caprice (*hawa*) which may consist of love, hatred, pomposity and prejudice that confound impartiality and sound judgment: *Had you considered he who took to himself his own desire as his god and whom God caused to go astray out of a knowledge, sealed over his having the ability to hear and his heart and laid a blindfold on his sight? Who, then, will guide him after God? Will you not, then, recollect?* (45:23)

And if you had followed their desires after what drew near you of the knowledge, there is not for you from God either a protector or a helper. (2:120)

But if they respond not to you, then, know that they only follow their own desires. (28:50)

And: *And obey not him whose heart We made neglectful of Our Remembrance and who followed his own desires and whose affair had been excess.*

(18:28)

The choice is between two alternatives: caprice (*hawa*) and guidance (*huda*); the former evidently renders obscure one's attempt to attain the latter.

(2) Pursuit of conjecture in the face of certitude: And surely conjecture (*al-zann*) avails nothing against the truth (*al-Haqq*). *And most of them follow nothing but opinion. Truly, opinion avails them not against The Truth at all.* (10:36)

And follow up not of what there is not for you knowledge of it. Truly, having the ability to hear and sight and mind, each of those will have been that which is asked. (17:36) Knowledge and truth stand in contradistinction with the pursuit of conjecture. Note that the text says one should not follow conjecture until it is established and elevated to the rank of knowledge. It does not say that one should avoid conjecture altogether. In another place, conjecture occurs side by side with *hawa* or that which they themselves desire: *They follow nothing but opinion and that for which their souls yearn.* (53:23) This is the kind of conjecture or opinion that is meant.

Knowledge is established by sense-perception that often begins with a measure of speculation and doubt but which is affirmed by the light of reason and conviction. Some commentators maintain that the main context for this guideline is religion: Thus it is said that one should not take speculative positions in matters of belief. As for scientific enquiry and pursuit of knowledge, conjecture is neither discouraged nor avoidable.[23]

The ultimate purpose of this engagement is to attain the truth. Once the truth is attained, one should then commit oneself to it and observe it: *And what else is there after The Truth but wandering astray. Where, then, turn you away?* (10:32)

Completed was the Word of your Lord in sincerity and justice. There is no one who changes His Words. (54) (6:115).

(3) Blind imitation of others: The correct exercise of reason in Islam is tied to personal conviction as opposed to indiscriminate following of others, hallowed custom, and precedent. These must be judged in the light of reason and abandoned if found deviant and misleading: The misguided will say, as the Quran provides: *Nay! We will follow whatever we discovered our fathers were following on it —even though their fathers had been not at all reasonable—nor are they truly guided.* (2:170)

And: *Enough is what we found our fathers upon. Even though their fathers had been knowing nothing nor are they truly guided?* (5:104)

This was the response that Prophet Abraham and other great prophets received from their detractors, but the text address them again and again that both you and your ancestors were clearly misguided. *Certainly, We gave Abraham his right judgment before. And We had been ones who know of him when he said to his father and his folk: What are these images to which you be ones who give yourselves up to? They said: We found our fathers as ones who are*

worshippers of them. He said: Certainly, you and your fathers had been in a clear wandering astray.(21:51-21:54)

Forsake those who took to themselves their way of life as a pastime and as a diversion and whom this present life deluded. (6:70)

Is it that your formal prayer commands you that we leave what our fathers worship? (11:87)

As we shall presently elaborate, indiscriminate imitation of others is widely held to be the single most damaging cause of the decline of creative thinking among Muslims.

(4) Oppressive Dictatorship: The Quran takes to task arrogant dictators and those who support them and follow them. Hence the plea of those who say: *Our Lord! Truly, we obeyed our chiefs and our great ones. They caused us to go astray from the way* (33:66) should be of no merit. In a number of other places the text denounces the Pharaoh and Karun for their oppressive ways who misled their people in rejecting the guidance that was conveyed to them. *Pharaoh and his Council but they followed the command of Pharaoh. And the command of Pharaoh was not well-intended.* (11:96)

DECLINE OF CRITICAL THINKING

I shall not retrace well-documented history that Muslim thinkers were pioneers in the creation of new knowledge. It was due to the impact of the Quran that, in contrast to the Greeks who excelled in deductive method of reasoning and logic, Muslim scientists distinguished themselves in inductive and experimental approaches to scientific enquiry. The golden period of Muslim science started around 700 AD and lasted until about 1350 AD. Great thinkers such as Ibn Sina, Jabir ibn Hayyan, Abu Bakr Zakarriya al-Razi, Abu Rayhan al-Biruni, Ibn al-Nafis al-Dimashgi, al-Khawarizmi, and many others have left a rich legacy of contributions to the advancement of sciences in anatomy, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, optics, etc.[24]

After the fourteenth century creative thinking began to decline in the Islamic world due to a variety of factors, including the Mongol invasion and burning of Baghdad, the defeat of the Muslim Arabs in Spain and the continuing crusades, the collapse of the Ottoman caliphate, and the ensuing onslaught of European colonialism. The creative impulse of Islamic thought suffered setbacks as a result. Muslims were also beset with many internal problems including the alienation of philosophers, scientists, and thinkers from the theologians, sectarian controversies, and the prevalence of intellectual conservatism and imitation of past authority (*taqlid*)).

Philosophy and the sciences fell into a rapid decline while more rigid forms of instruction and narrower curricula prevailed. It was argued that orthodoxy was being threatened and that there was a need to restrain thinkers in order to defend religion. The latitude and diversity of discourse that expanded the scope of religious sciences, theology (*kalam*), commentary (*tafsir*), hadith,

and jurisprudence (*fiqh*) gave way to narrower criteria of *kufr*, *bidah*, and *taqlid* and the so-called closing of the door of *ijtihad* (*sadd bab al-ijtihad*).[25]

More recently, a certain abuse of Islamic authority operated by a dogmatic radicalism has exacerbated the decline of creative thought among Muslims. The situation is not helped by the prevalence of passivity in popular culture concerning the dogmatic excesses of these ardent proponents of imitation of past authority (*taqlid*). One of the salient features of this mindset is a certain ignorance of the essential impulse of the Quran on creative thought. Malik bin Nabi put it succinctly that the crisis of a civilization and a society at a critical point of its history "is not the paucity of its material objects but the poverty of its ideas."[26]

WHAT IS *IJTIHAD*?

The Quranic appeal to rational thinking and enquiry is not restrained by the methodology of *ijtihad*. There is, in fact, no clear text on *ijtihad*[27] in the Quran. *Ijtihad* as a concept originates in the hadith of the Prophet and the practice and precedent of companions. The methodology of *ijtihad* which is the basic theme of the science of the sources of law (i.e. *usul al-fiqh*) is itself a product of *ijtihad*. It seems that the Prophet also saw *ijtihad* as a creative impulse rather than engaging in the technicalities of legal reasoning—as the *usul al-fiqh* later developed in abundance. When the Prophet spoke of *ijtihad* or when he approved of its application, he seems to have done so in terms of *ijtihad* qua creative thinking.

One would readily admit that imposing restrictions on thinking, even if it were possible, by cultures and legal traditions could be exaggerated, in which case it would be prone to acquiring negative dimensions. One would not, on the other hand, advocate free thinking that is not limited by some kind of goal-orientation and values. Even the actual process of creative thinking, as earlier noted, is a skill that could be learned and refined by stages to direct it into productive avenues. The liberal tradition of the West tends to impose minimal restrictions on thinking whereas Islam tends to take a more guided approach to creative reasoning. Whereas both the Islamic and Western traditions recognize the authority of reason as a criterion of judgment, the liberal tradition has, unlike Islam, isolated spirituality and faith from the ambit of scientific rationality.

However, the methodology of *ijtihad* was also influenced in the course of time by a variety of factors, including the political climate, the change of caliphate (*khilafah*) to monarchy (*mulk*), Hellenistic thought in relationship to analogy (*qiyas*) and its syllogistic components, and the rift between the religious scholars and ruling authorities.[28]

Usul al-fiqh and its proposed methodology followed a difficult course and became embroiled in technicality that had adverse consequences for *ijtihad*. What is needed now is to recapture the purity of this vital concept, to

make *ijtihad* as our principal instrument for originality and healthy adjustment, but also to revise and reform some aspects of the theory of *ijtihad* itself that are no longer responsive to the prevailing conditions and challenges of our time.

I have elsewhere discussed the theory of *ijtihad* and its related issues and space here does not permit engagement in detail.[29] Yet I conclude this section by suggesting, however briefly, that the conventional theory of *ijtihad* needs to be revised and reformed in respect of the need:

1) to recognize the validity of collective and consultative *ijtihad* (*ijtihad jama'i*) side by side with that of *ijtihad* by individual scholars;

2) to allow experts in other fields such as science, economics, and medicine to carry out *ijtihad* in their respective fields if they are equipped with adequate knowledge of the source evidence of Islam. They may alternatively sit together with, or seek advice from, those learned in *Shariah*.

Ijtihad has in the past been often used as an instrument of diversity and disagreement rather than of unity and consensus. Although disagreement must admittedly be allowed in principle, yet there is a greater need today for unity and consensus. Scholars and learned bodies should not perhaps encourage excessive engagement in diversity of schools and sects but try to find ways that would help to close the gap between them and encourage unity on principles. This may require policy guidelines for different settings and countries, and, if so, that should be reflected in our approaches to *ijtihad*. Certain guidelines may also be provided by thinkers and leaders to stimulate consensus-oriented *ijtihad* within the ranks of the judiciary and legislative assemblies.

Ijtihad has in the past been conceived basically as a legal concept and methodology. Our understanding of the source evidence on *ijtihad* does not specify such a framework for *ijtihad*. Rather, we think of the original conception of *ijtihad* as a problem-solving formula for the problems encountered by individual Muslims and the Muslim community. This would confirm our view of the need to broaden the scope of *ijtihad* to other disciplines beyond the framework of *fiqh* and *usul al-fiqh*.

According to a legal maxim of Islamic jurisprudence, there should be no *ijtihad* in the presence of a clear text of the Quran and Hadith (*la ijtihad ma'al-nass*). This maxim should also be revised. This is because of the possibility that the text in question could now be seen in a different light and given a fresh interpretation in a different context. What we are saying is that the legal text may need to be understood first and that by itself may involve *ijtihad*. Hence *ijtihad* may not be precluded if it could advance a fresh understanding of the text in the first place.

The persistent decline of critical reason among Muslims is due partly to the notion that the exercise of personal judgment and *ijtihad* ceased with the epoch-making works of the legists and imams of the past. Added to this is the prevailing mindset that a Muslim should follow one or the other of the estab-

lished schools of thought and abandon his judgment in favor of interpretations of the earlier centuries whose originators could have no conception of the necessities of the twenty-first century Muslims. Until about 1500 CE, independent *ijtihad* allowed Muslims and Muslim societies to continually adapt in the face of changing societal conditions and new advances in knowledge.

Unfortunately, as Muslim civilization began to weaken about four centuries ago in the face of Western advances, Muslims began to adopt a more conservative stance in an attempt to preserve traditional values and institutions. As a result Muslim thinkers became inclined to view innovation and adaptation negatively. For all the rhetoric and symbolic form of the neo-radicals that tend to dominate the audience of Muslims, the spirit of Islam is often palpably missing from their endeavors, while more than ever *ijtihad* is needed where women, education, and politics are concerned.

ISLAM AND THE WEST

Scientific rationality essentially reduces intelligence to the level of neural chemistry where mental and behavioral phenomena are understood merely as manifestations of physical processes. It tends to deprive us of our noblest dimensions (faith, love, beauty), separates the soul from the body, and the sensory from the intelligible. In the realm of economics, we are merely a producer and consumer of goods and is moved solely by our individual self-interest. This too is opposed to the Islamic viewpoint which also sees in us morality and transcendent faith.

This physicalist analysis of intelligence is now increasingly being seen as conceptually inadequate. The real question is whether one may admit a human dimension which is autonomous and irreducible to a physical mass. In Moravia's phrase "can one posit something which exists and yet at the same time is non physical? Do the rejection of the soul and the achievements attained by bio and neurosciences oblige us to hold that man is nothing but body?"[30] Recently these have been attempted by some creative thinkers to reconceptualize intentions of 'reason' and 'intelligence' along anti-materialistic lines drawing on the experience of older non-Western traditions, or even popular folk conceptions.[31]

Islamic philosophy—which mainly studies purposes, as against science which mainly studies causes—sees, in line with the Quranic teaching, the role of objects and events as signs of divine presence and action. Faith is understood by Muslims not as a limitation on science but as its vista for enrichment and perfection.[32]

The variant perspectives of Western philosophy and science are also behind the Western puzzlement why Muslims have not become more secularized. This unwarranted assumption has in the past led to mistaken assessments of Islam and continues to foster genuine misunderstanding concerning the real nature of Islamic religion and intellectual traditions. The misunderstanding is

unfortunately not unique to Westerners. For the majority of Muslims today are also woefully uninformed of the depth and scope of their rich heritage on the authoritative validity of reason. Thinking Muslims should work to vindicate the symbiotic relation of faith and reason in their religion and see it as a source of enrichment and contribution of Islam to human understanding and civilization.

CONCLUSION

This essay advanced a Quranic perspective on thinking, which is affirmative in critical and goal-oriented thinking and also provides a set of guidelines that ensures its purity and purpose from negative reductionist influences. The guidelines so provided are also rich in advancing a spiritual dimension with the understanding that thinking which is not informed by morality and faith can lose its direction and purpose and can even become harmful to human welfare. From the Quranic vantage point, the sciences of nature should be key to our cognition of the signs of God in the universe. For this may be instrumental in solving individual and social problems without interrupting the cosmic order and the human habitat on earth. The blatant disregard of ethical values in science has weakened scientists' sense of responsibility and contributed to the degradation of the human condition on the globe.

Since thinking is a skill that can be advanced by self-application and training, it is amenable to guidance, bereavement, and enrichment. Universities and institutions of learning in Muslim countries are generally short of resources, and those who have the means still fall short, to their detriment, of nurturing the culture of reading and research among their students and scholars. Centers of higher learning may do well to establish a new order of relationship between the natural sciences and humanities, and between all fields of knowledge and human welfare and also the avenues of benefit to society. The present-day education system is due for a reappraisal in order to instill creative thinking and breadth of vision among students and scholars that is informed by the inter-relatedness of the various disciplines of learning. This could be done, as one observer suggested, "by adding sufficient number of courses in humanities to the science and engineering curricula, by cross-disciplinary interaction and collaboration."[33] The main characteristic of the human sciences, from the Islamic perspective, is that they are not value-free and have to be incorporated within the value system of Islam that is informed by the ethical and human dimension of values.

It is ironic to note, however, that the vast majority of Muslims are wont to rote reading of the Quran which is patently vacuous and devoid of thinking. The Quran is usually read, committed to memory, and cited for its spiritual merit rather than intellectual stimulation and enrichment. This is evidently not the advice one obtains from the Quran itself Al-Qaradawi has rightly observed about the current realities of public education in Muslim countries that "the

system relies on memorization and cramming more than it does on comprehension and analysis. A typical weakness of this method is that the memorizer forgets as soon as the exams are over. But if what is learned is founded in understanding and comprehension, its substance will remain in the mind and will not be prone to oblivion so quickly."[34]

But the issue that we raise here is well-entrenched and originates in the overall emphasis that most educationists and jurists of earlier times have placed on the study of the Quran, Hadith and *fiqh* manuals, often calling attention to words and sentences of the text at the expense of comprehension and analysis. The basic approach to Quran studies thus emphasized correct pronunciation and memorization. This repetitive system of learning was particularly pronounced in the context of child education, although it was not confined to this framework as other and more advanced levels of Islamic scholarship also bore the same influence.[35]

Notwithstanding the profound influence of the Quran on the thoughts, mores, and cultures of Muslim individuals and societies, thinking by its nature does not lend itself to any predetermined framework and guideline. It seems that the Quran also seeks only to provide signs and signposts on thinking, but the subjective and innately individual bent of thinking is often inspired by imagination and insight which cannot be encapsulated by definitions and guidelines. A creative mind is unique by its attributes, and thinking that originates in a learned and upright individual is one of the greatest gifts of creation that can itself fit the description of divine example, or sign, of God on earth.

It remains to be added though that imaginative thinking has also been sparkled by sources and influences among great Muslim thinkers of other cultures and traditions—just as we note also that the great thinkers of history emerged in all regions, cultures, and religions. The substance of these statements is upheld in a renowned Hadith in which the Prophet instructed the Muslims to "seek knowledge, even unto China," and in another Hadith that "wisdom is the lost property of the believer; he is entitled to it wherever he finds it."

Knowledge and wisdom must therefore be ultimately seen as the shared achievements of humanity, endowed and posited by its outstanding and creative thinkers. This is also known from the fact that the outcomes of creative thinking are often shared and experienced far beyond geographical locales and frontiers—more so perhaps in the age of globalization.

It is hoped that the great thinkers and leaders of humanity make it a part of their agenda and commitment to narrow down the distances and divides between the intellectual and cultural traditions of the world and aspire them to the veritable vision of a shared destiny and wider human fraternity in their deliberations.

Mohammad Hashim Kamali[36]

PREVIEW *BOOK YEAR 12*

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

The Lessons in *Book Year 1* through *Book Year 24*, including *Book Year 12* presented here, are numbered consecutively in order of the revelation of a Quranic Chapter. Here, in *Book Year 12*, we begin with Lesson 76, that is, Quran Chapter 52 which is the 76th Chapter revealed followed by Quranic Chapters 67, 69, 70, 78 and, finally Lesson 81, Quranic Chapter 79.

We are beginning to reach Arabic dates that have been recorded for important events in the life of the Prophet. The listing of the dates according to the Gregorian calendar are complicated and approximate only. That is why they are preceded by ca. For those who wish to know more about this topic, here is an excellent article by M. Hamidullah written in 1969 in the *Islamic Review and Arab Affairs*. Scroll down to the article.
http://www.aaiil.org/text/articles/islamicreview/1969/02feb/islamicreview_196902.pdf

The chronological order of the chapters of the Quran that follow throughout the series is based on the list accepted by al-Azhar University in Cairo[1] and is considered to be the official order. It differs greatly from the chronological order developed by Western scholars over the centuries and is much more detailed.

Quranic signs or verses (*ayat*) of each section (*ruku*) in a particular Quranic chapter are given in each lesson followed by a commentary and a Student Assessment consisting of an Example of the Eight Elements of Reasoning and questions or assignments in Developing Quranic Critical Thinking Skills.

We do not have a great deal of detailed information about the life of the Prophet Muhammad during the Makkah period. The information that we have falls in the various lessons, the Prelude, an Interlude or the Epilogue. Appendix 1 correlates the original Quranic chapters with their chronological order.

LESSON 76(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY UTILIZING CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS, PRINCIPLES, VOCABULARY

WHAT IS A CONCEPT?

What is a concept? A concept is an idea or thought, especially a generalized idea of a thing or of a class of things. The Quranic text expresses clusters of concepts or ideas. It is these concepts that it uses that students need to learn to identify, contrast them with other of its concepts and clarify what they mean and what students include and exclude because of them. Quranic clusters of concepts include, for example, types of people: believer-disbelievers-ungrateful-hypocrites, living-creation; false-deity concept; sacred text concept. The latter, sacred text concept includes four concepts: The Quran itself, the Gospel, the Torah (the first five books of the Bible also known as the Pentateuch revealed to Moses), and the Psalms.

QURANIC CHAPTER 52: THE MOUNT (AL-TUR) SIGNS 52:1-52:28

Makkah: *By the mount* (52:1)
and by a Book inscribed (52:2)
on an unrolled scroll of parchment (52:3)
and by the frequented House (52:4)
and by the exalted roof (52:5)
and that which is poured forth over the seas, (52:6)
truly, the punishment of Thy Lord is that which falls. (52:7)
There is no one who averts it. (52:8)
On a Day when the heaven will spin a spinning (52:9)
and the mountains will journey a journey. (52:10)
Then, woe on a Day to the ones who deny, (52:11)
they, those are engaging in idle talk, play, (52:12)
on a Day they will be driven away with force
to the fire of hell with a driving away: (52:13)
This is the fire which you had been denying! (52:14)
Is this, then, sorcery or is it that you perceive not? (52:15)
Roast you in it!
Then, have patience, or you endure patiently not,
it is all the same to you.
You will be only given recompense
for what you had been doing. (52:16)
Truly, the ones who are God-conscious
will be in Gardens and bliss, (52:17)

ones who are joyful for what their Lord gave them.
And their Lord protected them
from the punishment of hellfire. (52:18)
Eat and drink wholesomely
because of what you had been doing. (52:19)
They will be ones who are reclining on couches arrayed.
And We will give in marriage to them lovely,
most beautiful eyed ones. (52:20)
And those who believed and their offspring
who followed them in belief,
We caused them to join their offspring.
And We deprived them not of anything of their actions.
Every man will be pledged for what he earned. (52:21)
And We furnished relief to them with sweet fruit
and meat such as that for which they lust. (52:22)
They will contend with one another for a cup around
which there is no idle talk
nor accusation of sinfulness. (52:23)
And boys of theirs will go around them
as if they had been well-guarded pearls. (52:24)
And some of them will come forward to some others
demanding of one another. (52:25)
They would say: Truly, we had been before
ones who are apprehensive among our people, (52:26)
but God showed grace to us and protected us
from the punishment of the burning wind. (52:27)
Truly, we had been calling to Him before.
Truly, He, He is The Source of Goodness,
The Compassionate. (52:28)

COMMENTARY°

These short signs: (52:1-52:16) use varied rhyming endings and a measured cadence which they maintain. In the Arabic text, they begin with a sign with just one word. Then the signs combine two words, then add more words until we have the last sign in this section of twelve words, yet the same powerful note is maintained.

The first sign reads in Arabic as *wa-Tur*, translated here as By Mount Sinai. The Arabic word, *Tur*, means a mountain with trees. Here, it most probably refers to the mountain mentioned in the Quran, in Moses' story where he received the tablets. The overall ambience is one of sacred objects stated in an oath by God confirming that something momentous will certainly take place.

The scripture inscribed on unrolled parchment refers, most probably, to the book of Moses which was written for him on the tablets. This reading fits well with the mention of Mount Sinai in the first sign. However, some scholars say that the reference is to the 'imperishable tablet' in heaven, as this fits with what follows, referring to the much-visited House and the vault raised high. This again is a clearly possible meaning.

The much-visited House may refer to the Kabah although it is more likely that it refers to a house in heaven where the angels worship. According to most scholars, the vault raised high refers to the sky.

God states an oath by these great creatures to confirm a great event. This opening makes us ready to receive it, fully aware that it is momentous: *Truly, the punishment of Your Lord is that which falls. There is no one who averts it.* (52:7-52:8) It is certain to happen. No one can stop it from happening. By their very sound, these two signs give the feeling that there is absolutely no question about its taking place. Furthermore, it overwhelms people: none can evade it. When a person receives this decisive note directly, without impediment, he feels its effect penetrate deep inside him.

These opening notes are followed by a fearful scene: *On a Day when the heaven will spin a spinning and the mountains will journey a journey.* (52:9-52:10) We have here two images that leave us shaken, bewildered: the sky that looks to us so firm and powerfully built is shaking and reeling, like high sea waves, and solid mountains slide away easily, lacking any firm base to stabilize them. It must be something extremely awesome that leaves the sky and the mountains in such chaos. So what will its effect on us be, a small and weak creature in the midst of a stupendous event?

In the midst of all this, the chapter hurls on those who deny the truth of the divine message something more serious and frightening; namely, a prayer hastening their punishment by the Almighty: *Then, woe on a Day to the ones who deny, they, those are engaging in idle talk, play.* (52:11-52:12)

This description applies in the first place to the pagan Arabs, their primitive beliefs, insupportable concepts and their way of life which the Quran describes in several places. It is all trifling play, nothing serious. They play like one hanging around in the middle of a lake, not aiming to reach the shore. Yet the description equally applies to anyone who leads their life on the basis of any concept other than the Quranic one. We cannot appreciate this unless we examine well known human concepts, as reflected in beliefs, legends or philosophies, and compare these with the Quranic concept of human

existence in particular and the existence of the universe generally. All concepts, even those advanced by famous philosophers seem to be no more than children's attempts to arrive at the truth as compared with the simple, profound and powerful truth as expressed by the Quranic message. This Quranic message puts its address directly to human nature, free of exertion or complexity. Human nature immediately responds because what is presented to it fits perfectly with the profound truth inherent in it. It explains its relation to the universe, as well as the relation between the universe and its Creator.

The Quranic message elevates people's concerns in as much as it elevates their concept of human existence and the human being's role in the universe. Furthermore, it provides clear and truthful answers to the questions everyone asks: Where have I come from, and why? Where do I go to when my term here is over? The Quranic answers to these questions define the true concept of existence. We are not a unique kind of creature. We come from where all creatures do, and we share with them the reasons for their existence. We go to where the Creator, in His infinite wisdom, determines. This means that the answers the Quranic message provides for our questions also give us a complete explanation of the universe, the interrelation between its inhabitants, its relation with us, and the bond between them all and the Creator of all.

The chapter issues a serious warning about what happens to those who play with vain trifles: *On a Day they will be driven away with force to the fire of hell with a driving away.* (52:13) This is a violent image. The chapter uses the Arabic word *datany* which signifies being pushed hard from behind. This suits those who spend their lives playing with trifles, unconcerned with what takes place around them. Therefore, they are driven and pushed in the back until they stand at the edge of hells fire, where they are told: *This is the fire which you had been denying!* (52:14)

At this point of utter distress, being pushed hard in the back and facing the fire in front, the ungrateful are faced with a strong rebuke that refers to their earlier denials: *Is this, then, sorcery or is it that you perceive not?* (52:15) They used to label the Quran as sorcery. Is the fire they are now facing also sorcery? Or is it the frightening truth? Or is it that they do not see the fire of hell in the same way as they could not see the truth of the Quran?

When this sarcastic rebuke is over, they are made to despair of any relief for their distress: *Roast you in it! Then, have patience, or you endure patiently not, it is all the same to you. You will be only given recompense for what you had been doing.* (52:16) Nothing is more painful to one who has to face such a calamity than to know

that bearing it with patience is the same as showing no patience at all. It will continue unabated and cannot be evaded in any way. Their suffering will be the same whether they panic or take things in their stride. Furthermore, it will continue regardless of what they do now. This suffering is the requital for what they have already done. Therefore, it cannot be altered.

The second section of the chapter is one of excitement, spreading comfort and happiness, particularly after the preceding scenes of outright distress: (52:17-28)

This scene is close to material comfort. It is of the type that addresses feelings in the early period, tempting the human soul with physical pleasures in their refined form. It contrasts with the scene of crude painful suffering that those who are oblivious to the truth have to face: *Truly, the ones who are God-conscious will be in Gardens and bliss, ones who are joyful for what their Lord gave them. And their Lord protected them from the punishment of hellfire.* (52:17-52:18) Just mere protection from the suffering of the fire which has already been described is a great blessing. How is it to be viewed then when it is coupled with admission into gardens and bliss? Moreover, these believers enjoy what God provides them with. It is all comfort and luxury plus hospitality and honor: *Eat and drink wholesomely because of what you had been doing.* (52:19) This in itself is a great blessing.

As they are so addressed from on high, they are told that they deserve whatever reward they are given. Furthermore, they will "recline on couches arranged in rows" giving them the pleasure of their brethren's company in such blissful surroundings. *They will be ones who are reclining on couches arrayed. And We will give in marriage to them lovely, most beautiful eyed ones.* (52:20) This represents mans best enjoyment.

Further honor is granted as their offspring, who are also believers, join them in their place of bliss. This is added care. Even if their offspring do not attain the standards of the God-fearing, as long as they are believers, they join their parents without detracting anything from their parents' reward. In no way, however, does this detract from personal responsibility and individual accountability. Rather, it is a favor that God bestows on them all: *And those who believed and their offspring who followed them in belief, We caused them to join their offspring. And We deprived them not of anything of their actions. Every man will be pledged for what he earned.* (52:21)

More is added to the scene as we are introduced to other aspects of enjoyment in an atmosphere of perfect happiness. These dwellers of heaven are given varieties of fruits and meat, and they pass around

a cup containing a drink that is totally different from the wines of this present world which loosen tongues with foul and dirty speech and tempt people into physical and mental sin. It is a pure drink causing no wrong: *They will contend with one another for a cup around which there is no idle talk nor accusation of sinfulness.* (52:23) They are gathered together as they pass it around, enjoying each others company. At the same time they are served by youths who reflect pure innocence and a shining friendliness: *And boys of theirs will go around them as if they had been well-guarded pearls.* (52:24)

This warm and happy scene is carried further as we are shown how these people in heaven converse, recalling memories of their worldly lives and outlining the reasons that ensured their happy end, with all its security, luxury, gratification and bliss. Thus the secret is given out and the way leading to this blissful ending is marked for all travellers: *And some of them will come forward to some others demanding of one another. They would say: Truly, we had been before ones who are apprehensive among our people, but God showed grace to us and protected us from the punishment of the burning wind. Truly, we had been calling to Him before. Truly, He, He is The Source of Goodness, The Compassionate.* (52:25-52:28)

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

DRAW A CONCEPT MAP

Alternatives to outlining are concept-mapping.

HOW DO I MAP?

First reject the idea of an outline, or of paragraphs using sentences.

Think in terms of key words or symbols that represent ideas and words:

CONCEPT MAPPING:

This is a type of brainstorming where you place the title/subject as the main idea, then develop a "mind map" around it. It can be effective either in a group or by yourself:

PRE-QUESTIONS:

Often chapters in texts provide organizing questions.

You can also write out a series of questions you expect to be answered when reading: Examples:

DEFINITION:

What is....?

Where does ... fit?

What group does ... belong to?

CHARACTERISTICS:
How would I describe...?
What does ... look like?
What are its parts?

VISUAL AIDS

Pictures and other visual material can activate your prior knowledge. Use the Internet to search for pictures related to your title/topic to give you visual images of what you are about to read.

How would your rate yourself? Can you give examples for the following:

EXAMPLES
What is a good example of ...?
What are similar examples that share attributes but differ in some way?

EXPERIENCE
What experience have I had with ....?
What can I imagine about ...?

LESSON 76(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
COMPARING ANALOGOUS SITUATIONS: REFRAME INSIGHT TO NEW CONTEXTS

In comparing analogous situations and transferring insights to new contexts, the example of the pilgrimage to Makkah and the Kabah comes to mind.

The Arabs had been practicing the pilgrimage for centuries. While the pilgrimage had been originally established by Abraham and his son, Ishmael for the worship of the One God, over time, the beliefs changed. People would still perform the pilgrimage to Makkah and the Kabah, but now the Kabah was filled with idols whom they worshipped. It became their custom to circumambulate the Kabah naked.

The life of the Prophet, so important in Islam, consist of the words which he spoke, the laws he brought, the deeds he performed, things he remained silent about or did not disagree with and deeds he actually performed in his lifetime without telling others that they should themselves perform them. The Traditions of the Prophet, then, are his words and his conduct. These become the rules of Islam which are divided into two groups: first, those which existed before Islam but were confirmed by the Prophet (signed rules); second, those which had not existed previously but were established by Islam (created rules). Besides these signed and created rules and the words and deeds of the Prophet, a third principle can also be perceived. It is my belief that it is the most sensitive. It is the method that the Prophet used.

The Prophet preserved the form, the container of a custom which had deep roots in society, one which people had gotten used to from generation to generation and one which was practiced in a natural manner, but he changed the contents, the spirit, the direction and the practical application of customs in a revolutionary, decisive and immediate manner.

He was inspired by a particular method which he uses in social combat. Without producing negative results, without containing any of the weak points of the other methods, his method contained the positive characteristics of the others. Through the customs of society which apply the brakes, he quickly attained his social goals. His revolutionary method was this: he maintained the container of a social tradition but inwardly changed the contents.

Before Islam, there was a custom of total ablution that was both a belief and a superstition. The pre-Islamic Arabs believed that when a person had sexual intercourse, he or she incarnated jinn (spirits

which inhabit the earth), thereby rendering both body and soul unclean. Until he or she found water and performed a total ablution, the jinn could not be exorcised.

Another example is the pilgrimage to Makkah. Before Islam, it was an Arab custom, full of superstitious ancestor worship. It was a glorified type of idol worship, holding economic advantage for the Quraysh tribe whereby the Kabah was filled with idols that were worshiped by the people. It had gradually come to assume this form from the time of Abraham. The Prophet was commanded to keep the form of the pre-Islamic custom of pilgrimage, as Abraham, the Friend of God, had built the Kabah for the worship of the One God, but through God's guidance, he changed the content. Now the pilgrimage was practiced to worship the One God.

The basis of the pilgrimage had been twofold: To protect the economic interests of the Quraysh merchants in Makkah and to create an artificial need among the Arab tribes for the Quraysh nobility. It was revealed to the Prophet of Islam to take this form and change it into a most beautiful and deep rite founded upon the unity of God and the oneness of humanity.

The Prophet, with his revolutionary stand, took the pilgrimage of the idol-worshipping tribes and changed it into a completely opposite rite. It was a revolutionary leap. As a result, while the Quraysh leaders opposed him because of their concern that they would lose their means of income, the Arab people underwent no anguish, no loss of values or beliefs, but rather, revived the truth and cleansed an ancient custom. They moved easily from idol worship to unity. Suddenly, they had left the past. Their society was not aware that the foundations of idol worship had been torn down. This leap, this revolutionary social method found within the (Quranic Sunnah) of the Prophet preserved the outer form, but changed its content. It maintained the container as a permanent element but changed and transformed the content. The Prophet, through the inspired method of his work, showed us that if we understand and can put his method into action, we can behave in a most enlightened and correct way.

A clear-visioned intellectual, confronted by outdated customs, ancient traditions, a dead culture and a stagnant religious and social order, takes up the mandate of the Prophet rather than submit to prejudices from the past. By this method one can reach revolutionary goals without the danger of revolution, on one hand, and without opposing the basis of faith and ancient social values on the other. By doing so, one does not remove oneself from people, nor does one become a stranger on whom people may turn and condemn. This method works because the Prophet received knowledge from the di-

vine Infinite, because he asked for the help of revelation and because he made use of what he received.

It was revealed to the Prophet of Islam to take the form of the pilgrimage and change it into a most beautiful and deep rite founded upon the unity of God and the oneness of humanity.

The conservative, at whatever cost, tries, to the last bit of his strength, to keep his customs—even if it means sacrificing himself and others. The revolutionary, on the other hand, wants to change everything into another form all at once. He wants to annihilate everything, to suddenly jump— whether or not society is prepared to leap in that direction. When the conservative senses the possibility of revolution, he turns to anger, dictatorship, and extensive public murders not only against his enemies but also against the people themselves. A reformer, on the other hand, always gives a corrupter the opportunity to destroy. The Prophet, through the inspired method of his work, showed us that if we understand and can put his method into action, we can behave in a most enlightened and correct way.[1]

The power of a Quranic concept is not limited by the ability you have to use it. Quranic thinkers make use of concepts in order to better their skills in understanding the Quran. It is through practice that they use these concepts by applying them to new situations, that is, by putting the concepts into practice.

Quranic thinkers focus on the basic Quranic concepts. You are encouraged to be able to reframe Quranic concepts, taking the Quranic form and changing the contents in modeling what Prophet Muhammad did.

QURANIC CHAPTER 52: THE MOUNT (AL-TUR)
SIGNS 52:29-52:49

Makkah: *So remind! **You** are not,*
*by the divine blessing of **your** Lord,*
a soothsayer nor one who is possessed. (52:29)
Or they say: A poet! We await for the setback
of fate for him. (52:30)
Say: Await for I am with the ones who are waiting. (52:31)
Or command their faculties of understanding to this?
Or are they a folk, ones who are defiant? (52:32)
Or say they: He fabricated it?
Nay! They believe not. (52:33)
Then, let them bring a discourse like it,
if they had been ones who are sincere. (52:34)
Or were they created out of nothing?

Or are they ones who are creators of themselves? (52:35)
Or created they the heavens and the earth?
Nay! They are not certain. (52:36)
*Or are the treasures of **your** Lord with them?*
Or are they ones who are registrars? (52:37)
Or have they a ladder by means of which they listen?
Then, let ones who are listening
bring a clear authority. (52:38)
Or has He daughters and they have sons? (52:39)
*Or have **you** asked them for a compensation*
so that they are from something owed
ones who will be weighed down? (52:40)
Or is the unseen with them
and they write it down? (52:41)
Or want they cunning?
But it is those who were ungrateful,
they are the ones who are outwitted. (52:42)
Or have they a god other than God?
Glory be to God above partners they ascribe! (52:43)
And if they consider pieces of the heaven descending,
they would say: Heaped up clouds! (52:44)
So forsake them until they encounter their day
in which they will be swooning. (52:45)
A Day when their cunning will avail them not
at all nor will they be helped. (52:46)
And, truly, for those who did wrong
there is a punishment besides that,
but most of them know not. (52:47)
*So have **you** patience*
*for the determination of **your** Lord,*
*for, truly, **you** are under Our eyes;*
*and glorify the praises of **your** Lord*
*when **you** hast stood up at the time of dawn,* (52:48)
and glorify at night and the drawing back of the stars. (52:49)

COMMENTARY°

The chapter now begins a series of rhetorical questions fashioned to a fast beat, presenting clear facts and addressing any remaining doubts the human soul might have. This round is full of strong challenges which no human heart can withstand: (52:29-44)

The address here is to the Prophet:*So remind! **You** are not, by the divine blessing of **your** Lord, a soothsayer nor one who is pos-*

sessed. (52:29) He should continue to remind people, undeterred by their rude and impolite behavior or their raise accusations. They used to say of him that he was a soothsayer, or a madman. These two descriptions are linked by the common notion that soothsayers received their information from the jinn, and that the jinn possessed those who were mad. Thus, the devil was the common element in both descriptions. What made them use either adjective—poet or sorcerer—to describe the Prophet was the fact that they were overwhelmed by the Quran. Its address was so unfamiliar to them even though, by nature, they were highly eloquent. Since they could not even think of admitting that it was Gods word, they felt that they needed to provide some plausible explanation for its superiority over anything they or others could say. Therefore, they claimed that it was imparted by the jinn, or that the jinn helped in its composition. They alleged that the man reciting it, i.e. Muhammad, was either a soothsayer receiving information from the jinn, or a sorcerer relying on the jinns help, or a poet who had a jinn friend, or a madman possessed by a jinn who gave him such wonderful speech.

This is a wicked accusation. Therefore, God consoles His Messenger showing it to be of no importance and reassuring him that he continues to enjoy His favors which allow no element of soothsaying or madness to affect him: *So remind! **You** are not, by the divine blessing of **your** Lord, a soothsayer nor one who is possessed.* (52:29) This is followed by a denunciation of their assertion that he was a poet: *Or they say: A poet! We await for the setback of fate for him.* (52:30) They indeed said that. *Say: Await for I am with the ones who are waiting.*(52:31) Soon enough, you will know who will end up in a better position.

Some of the Quraysh elders were accorded a position of respect on account of their perceived wisdom in conducting affairs. These are referred to here with a clear note of sarcasm, as their attitude to the Quranic message is the antithesis of wisdom and logic. The chapter sarcastically wonders whether the descriptions they attach to Muhammad are what their wise elders have arrived at? Or is it that they are arrogant, unjust people who do not listen to what the wise elders counsel: *Or are they a folk, ones who are defiant?* (52:32) The first question is loaded with sharp sarcasm; the second carries an accusation that should put them to shame. One or the other is indeed true when they adopt such an absurd attitude.

They were always rude in what they said about the Prophet. They even accused him of fabricating what he said to them. The chapter disapprovingly wonders whether they have made such a claim of fabrication against the Prophet, implying that such an alle-

gation could never have been made: *Or say they: He fabricated it?* (52:33) It immediately explains what lies behind such a singular allegation: *Nay! They believe not.* (52:33) The fact that in their hearts they did not really believe is the reason why they made such a statement. They simply cannot appreciate the true nature of the Quran. Had they appreciated it they would have known that no human being could have authored it, and that it could only have been delivered by a man of truth.

Since their hearts cannot appreciate the truth of this revelation, the chapter challenges them to provide irrefutable proof: *Then, let them bring a discourse like it, if they had been ones who are sincere.* (52:34) This challenge occurs several times in the Quran, yet those who deny the truth of the Quran could not take up the challenge. Furthermore, this challenge remains valid for the rest of time, and no one will ever be able to produce anything like the Quran.

Similar phenomena, as well as the subtle and the undeniably secret, combine to give the Quran its quality of an absolute miracle that remains valid for all time. No self respecting person can argue about this. He will readily admit the truth that stares him clearly in the face whenever he looks at the Quran with an open mind: *Then, let them bring a discourse like it, if they had been ones who are sincere.* (52:34)

The next question wonders at their own existence, a truth staring them in the face which they cannot explain in any way other than what the Quran states: God, the Creator of all that exists has brought them into existence: *Or were they created out of nothing? Or are they ones who are creators of themselves?* (52:35) The thought that they just existed out of nothing is against the logic of nature. It merits no argument. On the other hand, neither they nor any other creature can claim that they created themselves. As neither case can be logically entertained, there only remains the true case stated in the Quran, confirming that they are all creatures of God, the only Creator and Originator. Since no one can claim any share of His attributes of creation and origination, then Lordship and God belong solely to Him. This is clear and true logic.

The chapter then directs their attention to the heavens and the earth: are they the ones who created these? Needless to say, the heavens and the earth did not create themselves, in the same way as humans do not do so: *Or created they the heavens and the earth? Nay! They are not certain.* (52:36) Neither they, nor anyone listening to the logic of nature, claim that the heavens and the earth created themselves or came into existence without being created. Nor do those people claim that they created them. Yet they stand in front of people

like a question requiring an answer. When those very ungrateful were asked who created the heavens and the earth, they said that God created them. Yet this truth did not acquire such clarity as to produce its normal effects in their hearts and minds, leading them to formulate true and clear conviction: *Or created they the heavens and the earth? Nay! They are not certain.* (52:36)

The chapter then takes them a step lower than that of the creation of either themselves or the world around them. It asks them whether they own God's treasures or have control of these so as to be able to cause benefit and harm: *Or are the treasures of your Lord with them? Or are they ones who are registrars?* (52:37) If they make no such claim, then who owns these treasures and controls all things? The Quran says that God is the One who gives in plenty or in small measure, and who determines all affairs in the universe. This is the only explanation of what happens in the universe.

A further step down is then taken, and the chapter asks whether they have any means to listen to the source of revelation: *Or have they a ladder by means of which they listen? Then, let ones who are listening bring a clear authority.* (52:38) Muhammad tells them that he is a Messenger of God and that he receives revelations from on high. They reject this, claiming it as false. The chapter asks whether they have the means to climb up and listen to what He says, gaining information that supports their claims that he receives no such revelations, and asserts that the truth is contrary to what he says. This requires that they provide compelling evidence in support of their claims. This is an allusion to the great authority the Quran speaks with, yet they reject its clear and powerful message.

The chapter then brings into focus one of their absurd claims, alleging that the angels are God s daughters. It addresses them directly, adding an element of further reproach: *Or has He daughters and they have sons?* (52:39) They considered girls to be inferior to boys, and anyone of them would be full of gloom and frustration when they were told that they had begot girls. Yet they unashamedly attribute female offspring to God Almighty. Thus the chapter uses their own traditions and values to shame them.

They disliked receiving the Prophet's address. They disliked his message of guidance, feeling that it was a burden, even though it was given to them clear and pure. He asked no wages or payment for his trouble. The least that such a free presentation deserves is an appreciative response and a gentle refusal if they did not want to accept what he offered. Therefore, the chapter denounces their unjustified attitude: *Or have you asked them for a compensation so that they are from something owed ones who will be weighed down?* (52:40) Since

they are not asked to pay anything for it, their attitude appears to be totally indefensible and unwarranted. They should be ashamed of themselves.

Again, the chapter puts before them their true position in this universe. They are creatures with certain limitations. They are given access to a certain portion of this world, beyond which they cannot penetrate. It all belongs to the Creator. What lies beyond their reach is God's own preserve and they have no knowledge of it: *Or is the unseen with them and they write it down?* (52:41) They are well aware that they have no knowledge of what lies beyond their perception even though it is a reality. They have no means of accessing it. It is God who writes in its record whatever He determines for His creatures, while they cannot write a thing in it.

The One who is in control of that hidden reality and whatever occurs in that hidden realm is indeed the One who can determine and scheme. How come, then, that in their position of inability to record anything they try to scheme against you, aiming to entrap you? Why do they imagine that they can determine any future event, saying of the Prophet that he is a poet who would soon die? *Or want they cunning? But it is those who were ungrateful, they are the ones who are outwitted.* (52:42) It is they who are subject to whatever is determined by the Creator and Controller of the hidden reality. His schemes will certainly apply to them and take their effect. He is the best of all schemers.

Does such a deity, if they have one, protect them against what God determines for them? *Or have they a god other than God? Glory be to God above partners they ascribe!* (52:43)

With this exaltation of God and its clear statement of His Oneness this series of rhetorical questions, characterized by a powerful beat, is concluded. All their arguments have been refuted, and all doubts removed. They are presented with the clear truth and left without any excuse to justify their hostility to it. At this point their stubbornness in rejecting the clear truth is put clearly before their eyes: (52:44) This means that even if God decides to punish them by making a part of the sky fall down upon them, destroying their world, and they see it falling on their heads, they would still claim that it is but a mass of clouds, bringing rain and prosperity. It is just like the one who denies the truth of what he sees, even with a sword piercing his neck, as it were.

Leave them, then, until they face the day when they will be thunderstruck; the day when none of their scheming will be of any avail to them, when they will receive no support. Closer at hand more suffering awaits the wrongdoers, but most of them are not aware of it.

So, await in patience your Lord's judgement; for you are under Our watchful eyes. Extol your Lord's limitless glory and praise when you rise, and extol His glory at night, and at the time when the stars retreat. (52:45-52:49)

This final passage begins with a clear warning against what will happen on that frightening day when the trumpet is first blown and they are all totally stunned. This takes place shortly before the resurrection, when nothing will be of benefit and no help can be expected from any quarter. If, in this life, they are able to scheme and take action, nothing can stave off what will happen on that day. However, they will also endure another type of suffering before that. This is left unspecified, but it is certain to happen: (52:47)

Thus this long and determined attack is concluded, bringing the ungrateful face to face with the severe punishments that await them, one close at hand and the other to occur later. The chapter then speaks to the Prophet who was the target of their false accusations. He is instructed to face such adversity with patience. He is to remain steadfast, continuing his efforts to advocate God's message, and to leave the decision to God who determines whatever He will: (52:48)

Yet this directive is coupled with a confirmation of God s kindly care. Such loving care is certain to remove all hardship that the Prophet may have to face. Thus, perseverance in the face of adversity becomes acceptable, and even welcome, since it is the means to such compassionate care: (52:48) This expression is unique, describing a position that has never been attained by any human being. Nowhere else in the Quran is this expression used, even though some similar expressions of overflowing care are used.

Finally, the way to maintain this close contact is outlined: (52:48-52:49) Thus, throughout the day, as one wakes up, during the night, at the time when stars begin to disappear at dawn, there is a clear chance to enjoy such friendly care. Glorifying God imparts strength, friendliness and the chance of a heartfelt address to God Almighty. All this stems from a dearly loving heart!

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

You will begin to see how important and pervasive social definitions are. You will begin to redefine situations in ways that run contrary to some commonly accepted definitions. You will notice then how redefining situations (and relationships) enables you to get in touch with your emotions. You may then recognize that the way you think (that is, define things) generates the emotions you experience. When you think you are threatened (i.e., define a situation as threatening), you feel fear. If you define a situation as a 'failure', you may feel depressed. On the other hand, if you define that same situation as a 'lesson or opportunity to learn' you feel empowered to learn. When you recognize this control that you are capable of exercising, the two strategies begin to work together and reinforce each other.

How would your rate yourself? Do you agree with the following statements?

WHAT IS TOO LITTLE COURAGE?

Cowardice or weakness is an obstacle to courage. It is wrong to show weakness in face of difficulties, to lose heart, to be weak in will, to be weary and faint-hearted, to despair or boast, to be impatient and fretful. It is forbidden to be afraid of men or of Satan and his protectors. It is only Satan who frightens you with his protectors. So fear them not, but fear Me if you had been ones who believe. (3:175)

WHAT IS TOO MUCH COURAGE?

There are certain obstacles which arise out of misuse of courage, that is, too much courage. Warning is given to those people who oppress people with wrong-doing and insolently transgress beyond bounds through the land, defying right and justice. The way is only against those who do wrong to humanity and are insolent in and on the earth unrightfully. *Those, for them is a painful punishment.* (42:42) *It is forbidden to exhibit fierceness: Mention when those who were ungrateful laid zealotry in their hearts, like the zealotry of the Age of Ignorance. Then, God caused to descend His tranquility on His Messenger and on the ones who believe and fastened on them the Word of God-consciousness. They had been with right to it and were more worthy of it;* (48:26) to be arrogant against God: *And rise not up against God. Truly, I am one who arrives with a clear authority* (44:19) for arrogance blinds people to the truth; *and they negated them—although their souls confessed to them—out of injustice and self-exaltation. So look on how had been the Ultimate End of the ones who make corruption;* (27:14) to swell one's cheek with pride, or walk in insolence through the earth: *And turn not your cheek away from humanity nor walk through the earth exultantly. Truly, God loves not any proud boaster* (31:18) for one cannot rend the earth asunder or reach the mountains.

LESSON 77(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
DEVELOPING ONE'S PERSPECTIVE: CREATING OR EXPLORING ARGUMENTS

Uncritical thinkers who exhibit selfishness similar to the ungrateful around Prophet Muhammad tended to assume that their own view of things was the only correct way to see the world. They tried to manipulate the views of others to their own advantage.

Fair-minded Quranic thinkers are like our beloved Prophet who followed the way of Prophet Abraham. Prophet Abraham recognized that his own way of thinking and interpreting the world around him required insight and experience through trial and error. He went through a critical analysis of his experience. He questioned the commonly held belief of the people around him. For his part, he explored his own beliefs and his own reasoning and theories. This was essential to his thinking and behavior. Once he experienced this, he was certain of his perspectives and could speak about them with deep insight.

QURANIC CHAPTER 67: THE DOMINION (AL-MULK)
SIGNS 67:1-67:14

Makkah: *Blessed be He in whose hands*
is the dominion
and He is Powerful over everything! (67:1)
He Who created death and this life
that He try you as to which of you
is fairer in action.
And He is The Almighty, The Forgiving, (67:2)
Who created the seven heavens one on another?
Thou hast not seen any imperfection
in the creation of The Merciful.
*Then, return **your** sight! Have **you** seen any flaw?* (67:3)
*Again, return **your** sight twice again*
*and **your** sight will turn about to **you**,*
one that is dazzled while it is weary. (67:4)
And, certainly, We made to appear pleasing
the lower heaven with lamps
and We assigned them things to stone satans.
We made ready for them the punishment of the blaze. (67:5)
And for those who were ungrateful to their Lord
is the punishment of hell.
Miserable will be the Homecoming! (67:6)
When they were cast down into it,
they would hear it sighing while it is boiling (67:7)
and about to burst with rage.

As often as a unit of them were cast down into it, the ones who are keepers there asked them:
Approaches not a warner to you? (67:8)
They will say: Yea! A warner drew near us, but we denied him.
And we said: God sent not down anything.
You are not but in a great going astray. (67:9)
And they would say: If we had been hearing or are reasonable,
we would not have been Companions of the Blaze. (67:10)
And they would acknowledge their impiety.
Then, hell for the Companions of the Blaze! (67:11)
Truly, those who dread their Lord in the unseen,
for them is forgiveness and a great compensation. (67:12)
Keep your saying secret or publish it, truly,
He is Knowing of what is in your breasts. (67:13)
Would He who created not know?
And He is The Subtle, The Aware. (67:14)

COMMENTARY°

The key to the whole chapter and the axis of the movement it sets in our hearts, minds, senses and feelings are found in its inspiring opening: (67:1) It is from the truth of Gods dominion and power that all images presented in the chapter as well as all hidden and apparent movements to which it alludes, branch out. Thus, the creation of life and death, testing people through them, the creation of the heavens and their adornment with lamps that serve as missiles pelting devils, the preparation of hell as it is described, the knowledge of what is secret and public, making the earth easy for humans to live upon, the destruction of early communities who rejected divine guidance, holding birds in the sky, Gods overwhelming power and His exaltation, providing sustenance to all as He pleases, His creation of people and granting them hearing, eyesight and hearts, causing them to multiply on earth and then gathering them all, His full knowledge of the hereafter which is His own preserve, the meting out of punishment to the ungrateful, the provision of water, which is essential to life, and the ability to take it away whenever He wishes all emanate from the fact that to God belongs all dominion in the universe. He has power over all things.

The chapter states a long sequence of truths that flow uninterruptedly with successive impressions and ideas to explain its concise, yet comprehensive, opening. It is, therefore, difficult to divide into passages. Let us, then, look at it as it develops its theme from start to finish.

Blessed be He in whose hand all dominion rests; who has power over all things. *Blessed be He in whose hands is the dominion and He is Powerful over everything!* (67:1)

Coming as it does at the outset of the chapter, this glorification imparts a feeling of the multiplication of God's blessings and their continued outflowing. The fact that dominion is mentioned alongside it suggests that this blessing flows over Gods kingdom. Therefore, it is glorified throughout the universe, as it is glorified with God Himself. It sounds like a hymn echoed throughout the universe and within every creatures heart. It begins with the divine word in Gods glorious book, the Quran, inscribed in a well-guarded record, and which spreads throughout the universe.

He is the Sovereign who has full control over the universe; *Blessed be He in whose hands is the dominion and He is Powerful over everything!* (67:1) He conducts its affairs. When this truth is established in the human heart, its direction and destination become well defined. It no longer turns to anyone or relies on anyone other than the Sovereign to whom all dominion belongs. It feels free from submission to anyone else. It, thus, addresses its worship to none other than Him.

Nothing escapes Him, and no one diverts or limits His will. He creates and does what He wants. He has full power over everything. His will is subject to neither limitation nor restriction. As this truth becomes well established, the human mind is free to perceive God s will and action that are free of any restriction our senses, perception of reality or what lies beyond it, or indeed our imagination can visualize. God's power extends far beyond anything that a human mind can entertain. After all, human imagination is restricted in its expectation of change by what is familiar to it. Appreciation of the truth of God's limitless power removes this restriction. Therefore, a believer expects God's power to accomplish anything, without limit or restriction. *He Who created death and this life that He try you as to which of you is fairer in action.* (67:2)

One of the results of His complete dominion of the universe and absolute power over all things is that He created death and life. The term 'death' in this context includes the death that precedes life and the one that follows its end, whereas 'life' includes this first life and the life to come. All these are of God's creation as stated in this sign. In this way, it establishes this truth in the human mind, alerting it to the test it aims to set. Nothing, then, comes by blind coincidence or without purpose. The test aims to establish, in reality, what God knows in advance of people's behavior on earth and the reward they merit for their actions: *And He is The Almighty, The Forgiving.* (67:2)

Thus, we should always be on the alert, considering every thought and every action. we should not be oblivious to anything. This also means that we are unable to rest. Therefore, the sign ends with the comment: It thus gives reassurance to every God-fearing servant. God is certainly The Almighty, but He is at the same time The Forgiving. When a persons heart is alert, aware that this life is a test, and tries to keep on the right track, he is reassured of God's forgiveness and grace. This gives us all the rest and comfort we need.

The truth the Quranic message establishes in peoples hearts does not depict God as chasing humans to afflict or punish them. He only wants them to be aware of the purpose behind their existence and of their true nature. He wants them to rise to the level worthy of His honor when He blew of His own spirit into them, elevating them above many of His other creations. When they have absorbed this truth and hold to it, they will find that His grace, mercy and forgiveness are always available to them.

This great truth is then anchored to the universe at its broadest and highest. At the same time, the universe is shown to be related to the truth of reward and requital in the life to come: (67:3-67:11)

Everything this passage mentions is a result of the first sign and is an aspect of the complete sovereignty God exercises over His dominion and of His free, unrestricted power. Everything it contains confirms what the second sign states of the creation of death and life to test people and then their reward according to what their test proves.

Whilst the Quran always turns our attentions to Gods creation generally, it also specifically directs us to the heavens above. The perfection of His creation is enough to make our eyes turn back in absolute amazement: ***You have not seen any imperfection in the creation of The Merciful. Then, return your sight! Have you seen any flaw?*** (67:3) No flaw, no defect, no imbalance is ever seen in Gods creation: (67:3) Can you detect anything out of place? ***Again, return your sight twice again and your sight will turn about to you, one that is dazzled while it is weary.***(67:4) You might have overlooked something in your first perusal, so make sure by looking again and again.

Posing such a challenge heightens the importance of what people are being directed towards. In this way, they are made to look seriously at the heavens and at Gods creation in general. It is precisely such a contemplating, examining look that the Quran wants people to cast. Familiarity breeds contempt, and our long presence in this world takes much away from its fascinating perfection and meticulous cohesion.

Like perfection, beauty is also deliberately placed in the uni-

verse. Indeed, the two stem from the same truth. When perfection is attained, beauty is a part of it. Therefore, having drawn our attention to the perfection in the creation of the heavens, the Quran now mentions their beauty: *And, certainly, We made to appear pleasing the lower heaven with lamps and We assigned them things to stone satans. We made ready for them the punishment of the blaze.* (67:5) What is the lowest heaven? Perhaps it is the one nearest to the earth and its people to whom the Quran is addressed. The lamps mentioned here may refer to the stars and planets that we see with the naked eye as we look up to the sky. This fits with the invitation to look at the sky at a time when they had nothing other than their eyes and what they saw of shining stars.

The chapter states that the lamps which adorn the lowest heaven also have another function: *And, certainly, We made to appear pleasing the lower heaven with lamps and We assigned them things to stone satans. We made ready for them the punishment of the blaze.* (67:5) We have established a rule in this commentary that we do not try to add any explanation to any matter relating to the world beyond our faculties of perception. We limit ourselves only to whatever God tells us about them, leaving the Quranic text as it is. This is certainly enough to state whatever is needed for our comprehension. We certainly believe that a different type of creation is the devils. Some description of them is given in the Quran, and we have referred to these in our commentary wherever they occur. We have though added nothing to what the Quran states. We, therefore, believe that these lamps, which God placed as adornments of the lowest heaven, are also used as missiles to pelt devils with. This may be in the form of shooting stars, as mentioned in another chapter:

The chapter speaks further about what God has in store for such devils, other than these pelting missiles: *And, certainly, We made to appear pleasing the lower heaven with lamps and We assigned them things to stone satans. We made ready for them the punishment of the blaze.* (67:5) This means that they will be pelted with missiles in this present life and that they will suffer the blazing fire in the life to come. Perhaps this comes as a follow up to what the chapter says about the heavens and prior to what it says about the ungrateful. The relation between devils and unbelievers is obvious. Thus, having mentioned the heavens and their lamps, the chapter refers to these lamps' other function, as missiles for pelting devils. Then, as it speaks of what is prepared for these devils in the life to come, the chapter mentions what is made ready for the ungrateful who follow those devils: *And for those who were ungrateful to their Lord is the punishment of hell. Miserable will be the Homecoming!* (67:6) It then

carries on to give us an image of hell, full of rage and anger, as it receives the ungrateful: (67:7-67:8)

The same is expressed by the angels who guard hell: *As often as a unit of them were cast down into it, the ones who are keepers there asked them: Approaches not a warner to you?* (67:8) It is clear that the question is meant as a rebuke. They share hells anger and they participate in meting out punishment. Nothing hurts a person in distress more than a rebuke. The answer is given in humility, acknowledging their own lack of judgement and utter stupidity when they denied God's Oneness, relying on no evidence whatsoever. Furthermore, they make a wild accusation against God s messengers, who have always stated the truth, clear and simple: *They will say: Yea! A warner drew near us, but we denied him. And we said: God sent not down anything. You are not but in a great going astray.* (67:9)

This is a prayer: *Would He who created not know? And He is The Subtle, The Aware.* (67:14) made by God against them. This after they have acknowledged their guilt, at a time and place they denied would ever occur. Prayer by God denotes a judgment. Thus, they are far removed from God's mercy. They cannot hope for forgiveness or exemption from punishment. They dwell in the blazing fire. What a fate!

It is customary in the Quran to portray images of the Day of Judgment in two contrasting scenes. Therefore, we now have a scene showing the believers as compared with the ungrateful. In this way, we have the full meaning of the statement at the chapter's outset: *He Who created death and this life that He try you as to which of you is fairer in action. And He is The Almighty, The Forgiving.* (67:2) Having mentioned the test, the chapter completes its account by speaking of the reward: *Truly, those who dread their Lord in the unseen.* (67:12)

The phrase beyond the reach of human perception expresses the meaning of the Quranic word *ghayibn* In its use in this sign it includes their fear of God whom they have never seen, as well as their fear of Him when they are alone, unseen by any human eye. Both are fine qualities, reflecting a pure feeling and a profound understanding which together qualify a person to receive what the chapter expresses in general terms as *for them is forgiveness and a great compensation.*

To watch God when one is alone, unseen by any other human being is the gauge of a heart's sensitivity and the quality that keeps conscience alive. Anas ibn Malik reports that some of the Prophets Companions said to him: Messenger of God! When we are with you

we are at a certain standard, but when we depart we are at a different one.

He asked: How do you feel with regard to your Lord?

They answered: God is our Lord in secret and open situations.

He said: Yours is not a case of hypocrisy.

The bond of God is, then, the essential criterion. Once it is firm in ones heart, one is a true believer.

This last sign provides a bridge linking what precedes it with what comes after. It emphasizes God's knowledge of everything, whether it is said in public or private. He, thus, challenges humanity. It is He who created them and He who knows their inner souls:

Keep your saying secret or publish it, truly, He is Knowing of what is in your breasts. Would He who created not know? And He is The Subtle, The Aware. (67:13-67:14)

They are told they can say what they like, in whatever way they like; it is all equally known to God, for He knows what is concealed deeper even than secrets. *Keep your saying secret or publish it, truly, He is Knowing of what is in your breasts.* (67:13) Even those thoughts that are kept deep within ones breast, unexpressed, are also known to Him. It is He who created these thoughts, just as He created the breasts that keep them. *And He is The Subtle, The Aware.*(67:14) The One who has created them must surely know all about them. (67:14) His knowledge encompasses every little detail and every hidden feeling and thought.

The Quran makes sure of instilling this truth in peoples minds because this gives them the correct understanding. Additionally, it keeps people alert and conscious of God, able to fulfil the trust believers are assigned in this world. This is the trust of faith, maintaining justice and dedication to God in both action and intention. Such understanding cannot be achieved until we clearly realize that we, our hearts and minds, our secrets and intentions, are all of God's creation; it is all fully known to Him. When a believer attains such realization, he purges his heart of bad intentions and fleeting thoughts just as he keeps his open behavior and expressed statements on the right track. He deals with God in all situations, public or private, open or secret.

Student Assessment

Example of How Critical Thinking Works

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evi-

dence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Learn to take interdisciplinary philosophical, socio-political, scientific and Quranic concepts and opinions, considering them from various angles and points of view without ignoring anything and then examine them carefully. Try to arrive at logical conclusions and put aside all that fails in its logic. Your perspectives are developed through extended thought, discussion, and writing. You who are unsure what to think can be given time to reflect and come to tentative conclusions. You who have definite conclusions about the subject at hand can consider ideas from other perspectives, answer questions about what you think, or reflect on new situations or problems. You can compare what you say you believe with how you act. You can raise basic and important questions about what you learn, discovering and discussing underlying principles in your thought.

Have you tried the strategy below? How would your rate yourself?

One-to-one questioning may facilitate development of perspective, especially for those who think they've exhausted their ideas. This strategy will also often coincide with evaluating actions and policies, arguments, or assumptions.You could explain how what you have learned from the Quranic signs has changed your thinking in some way. During classroom discussions, you should raise points made during study. You should relate your general ideas to specifics you have studied, explore important questions, and integrate the Quranic details.

LESSON 77(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

Quranic knowledge can be divided into multiple categories as this knowledge served as the basis for the development of Islamic sciences over the centuries. There are concepts that are basic to the study of Anthropology, History, Political Science, Mathematics, Logic and so forth. Understanding the interdisciplinary connections of the Quranic sacred text, take relevant concepts, knowledge and insight from the Quranic signs so that you are continuously finding connections between various categories of knowledge whether it be the basic principles of the arts or science.

Quranic critical thinkers:

> ... do not allow the somewhat arbitrary distinctions between academic subjects to control their thinking. When considering issues which transcend subjects, they bring relevant concepts, knowledge, and insights from many subjects to the analysis. They make use of insights into one subject to inform their understanding of other subjects. There are always connections between subjects: language and logic; history, geography, psychology, anthropology, physiology; politics, geography, science, ecology; math, science, economics.[2]

INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

Science: In doing research in the sciences, Quranic thinkers record from in depth observation, collecting as much information as possible and then critiquing their analysis of the gathered information so that they can draw the best possible inference through the use of inductive reasoning. He Who taught by the pen. He taught the human being what he knows not. (96:4-96:5)

Politics: Quranic thinkers try to obtain their own inferences after listening to .... what is said and follow the fairer of it. Those are those whom God guided. Those, they are imbued with intuition. (39:17-39:18) After listening to all opinions, they try to arrive at the best of the varying opinions as you differ in what you say. (51:8)

Education: Education in schools after listening to .... what is said and follow the fairer of it calls on students to learn all types of concepts, faiths and ideas and then choose their own.

Psychology: Our ability to reason (our cognitive system: *Will you not be reasonable?*) comes from our rational soul (*nafs-i natiqah*). We use our reason to help us regulate our animal soul (see Quran 12:53; *nafs-i ammarah*), our emotions and behavior by keeping them in a state of equilibrium, balance or moderation, on the Straight Path.

Note for the Teacher: Do not allow the somewhat arbitrary distinctions between academic subjects to control their thinking. When considering issues

which transcend subjects, they bring relevant concepts, knowledge, and insights from many subjects to the analysis. They make use of insights into one subject to inform their understanding of other subjects. There are always connections between subjects: language and logic; history, geography, psychology, anthropology, physiology; politics, geography, science, ecology; math, science, economics.[3]

QURANIC CHAPTER 67: THE DOMINION (AL-MULK) SIGNS 67:15-67:30

Makkah: *It is He who made the earth*
submissive to you,
so walk in its tracts and eat of His provision.
To Him is the rising. (67:15)
Were you safe from He Who is in the heaven
that He will not cause the earth
to swallow you up when it spins? (67:16)
Were you safe from He Who is in the heavens
that He will not send against you a sand storm?
You will know how My warner has been right! (67:17)
And, certainly, those who were before them denied.
Then, how horrible had been My reproach! (67:18)
Consider they not the birds above them
ones standing in ranks and closing their wings?
Nothing holds them back but The Merciful.
Truly, He is Seeing of everything. (67:19)
Who is this who would be an army for you
to help you other than The Merciful?
Truly, ones who are ungrateful are not but in delusion. (67:20)
Or who is this who will provide for you
if He held back His provision?
Nay! They were resolute,
turning in disdain and aversion. (67:21)
Then is whoever walks as one who is prone
on his face better guided,
or he who walks without fault on a straight path? (67:22)
Say: It is He who caused you to grow
and assigned you the ability to hear, sight, and minds.
But you give little thanks! (67:23)
Say: It is He who made you numerous on the earth
and to Him you will be assembled. (67:24)
And they say: When is this promise if you had been
ones who are sincere? (67:25)

Say: The knowledge of this is only with God
and I am only a clear warner. (67:26)
But when they saw the punishment nigh, the faces were troubled
of those who were ungrateful.
And it will be said to them:
This is what you had been calling for. (67:27)
Say: Considered you if God would cause me to perish
and whoever is with me or had mercy on us,
who will grant protection to the ones who are ungrateful
from a painful punishment? (67:28)
Say: He is The Merciful.
We believed in Him and in Him we put our trust.
Then, you will know who he is,
one who is clearly gone astray. (67:29)
Say: Considered you? If it came to be in the morning
that your water be sinking into the ground,
who approaches you with assistance from water springs ? (67:30)

COMMENTARY°

The chapter now refers to the earth, which God has created for us to live on. He smoothed it and provided in it all the means that enable it to support human life: *It is He who made the earth submissive to you, so walk in its tracts and eat of His provision. To Him is the rising.* (67:15)

The Arabic term used in the chapter to describe the earth as easy to live upon which is normally used to describe an animal that is'broken so that we can use it as a mount. Science tells us that use of this term is apt, because the earth which we see as stable and motionless is nonetheless certainly moving. What is more is that it is running at a fast pace, without stopping. Nevertheless, it is broken so as not to throw off its rider and not to trample him as it goes along. It does not shake him as it moves, but rather gives him an easy ride. Moreover, it is just like a mount that produces milk, yielding much.

When mans heart is alert to this great fact, God, the Creator, the Lord of Grace, the Ever Merciful, allows him to go about wherever he wishes, and to eat of His provisions: *It is He who made the earth submissive to you, so walk in its tracts and eat of His provision. To Him is the rising.* (67:15)

Do you feel secure that He who is in heaven will not cause the earth to swallow you up when it quakes? Or do you feel secure that He who is in heaven will not let loose against you a sandy whirlwind. You will come to know the truth of My warning. Those who lived

before them also disbelieved. How terrible was My rejection of them? (67:16-67:18)

This strong warning now gives way to a call to reflect on something that we often sees but rarely consider and contemplate. It is yet another aspect of God's great design of creation and of His limitless power: *Consider they not the birds above them ones standing in ranks and closing their wings? Nothing holds them back but The Merciful. Truly, He is Seeing of everything.* (67:19)

The next sign, however, returns the ungrateful to fear. Thus, they alternate between feelings of fear and admiration of Gods creation: *Who is this who would be an army for you to help you other than The Merciful? Truly, ones who are ungrateful are not but in delusion.* (67:20)

Who will provide for you, if He were to withhold His provision? Yet they persist in their arrogance and in rebellion. *Or who is this who will provide for you if He held back His provision?* (67: 21)

Every mental endeavor we make is part of God's provision. Is He not the Creator who gave us the ability to think and invent? Besides, what can anyone produce unless he uses a substance initially made by God, and utilizes natural and human factors provided by Him? *Nay! They were resolute, turning in disdain and aversion.* (67:21)

On top of all this, they described the Prophet and those who followed him as having gone astray, claiming that they were better guided than them. The same is levelled at the advocates of faith by ungrateful in every community. Therefore, the chapter paints a true to life image of the status of both parties: *Then is whoever walks as one who is prone on his face better guided, or he who walks without fault on a straight path?* (67:22) The one who grovels on his face is either someone who actually walks on his face instead of the right way using his feet and legs, or is someone who trips as he walks, falling on his face. He then lifts himself up only to trip again. Both are miserable conditions, beset with affliction and hardship. Neither leads to proper guidance or goodness. How far removed such conditions are from that of one who walks upright, steady along a way that is free of pitfalls and crookedness, fully aware of the goal towards which he moves.

The first is the situation of a miserable person who has deviated from God's way and, as such, become deprived of His guidance. He is on a collision course with Gods laws and creatures, taking up a way different from theirs. Therefore, he is always falling and tripping, tired and lost. The second situation is that of a happy person, benefiting by Gods guidance and enjoying travelling along the way

charted by believers who always glorify and praise Him. Thus, he joins the procession of the entire universe and of all living and inanimate creatures.

In connection with following guidance or error, the chapter reminds people of the means God has provided for them and the faculties of understanding He has equipped them with, yet still they do not put these to good use: *Say: It is He who caused you to grow and assigned you the ability to hear, sight, and minds. But you give little thanks!* (67:23)

A reminder follows making it clear that God has not created humanity and given them all their distinctive qualities haphazardly, without a definite purpose: it is all for the purpose of initiating life that incorporates a test and then the administering of reward and requital at the end: *Say: It is He who made you numerous on the earth and to Him you will be assembled.* (67:24)

The Arabic term used in the sign to denote multiplication also signifies spreading far and wide, which provides a contrast in both image and meaning with the second action of gathering. The chapter gives both images in a short sign so as to present these vividly before our eyes. Thus, people who have spread all over the earth will realize that they are moving towards an end that brings them all together for an ultimate purpose: one that brings the test of life and death to its final goal.

The chapter then mentions their doubts concerning this promised gathering: *And they say: When is this promise if you had been ones who are sincere?* (67:25) Such a question is put only by one who is in serious doubt or one who is in stubborn denial. Knowing the exact time of the fulfilment of the promise adds nothing to its truth. It has nothing to do with the fact that it is the time appointed for requital after the test has been completed. It is the same to them whether it takes place tomorrow or after millions of years. What is certain is that it is going to happen. Then they will be gathered to receive what they deserve for what they have done in their lives.

God has not imparted knowledge of the Day of Judgment to anyone of His creatures, because such knowledge serves none of their interests. Indeed, imparting such information is against the very nature of this day and has no bearing on the duties people are asked to fulfil in preparation for it. On the contrary, withholding such information from all creatures and keeping it with God Almighty is an act of wisdom that serves human interests. Therefore, the answer: *Say: The knowledge of this is only with God and I am only a clear warner.* (67:26)

We see them here putting forward questions that imply doubts and being given firm and decisive answers. The chapter then presents

an image depicting the subject of their questioning, this day has now arrived. The promise they have seriously doubted is fulfilled and they face it here and now: *But when they saw the punishment nigh, the faces were troubled of those who were ungrateful. And it will be said to them: This is what you had been calling for.* (67:27) Here is this day that you have always claimed will never take place; it is staring you in the face.

The ungrateful hoped that the Prophet and the small group that followed him would soon perish, thereby ridding them of a problem that caused much anxiety. They counselled each other to persist until he so died, when they would be able to patch things up and resume their life as before. Sometimes they voiced the claim that God would take Muhammad and his followers away because they were in error, fabricating lies against God! Therefore, as the chapter puts before them the scene of gathering and requital on the Day of Judgment, it alerts them to the fact that even if their wish were fulfilled, they would not be immune from facing the consequences of their disbelief. Therefore, it is far better for them to be well prepared for this appointed day, shown to them as though it were taking place there and then: *Say: Considered you if God would cause me to perish and whoever is with me or had mercy on us, who will grant protection to the ones who are ungrateful from a painful punishment?* (67:28)

The chapter then outlines the believers' attitude, one based on faith, and how they place their full trust in God, relying on Him. They are very confident, assured that they are on the right course, well guided, and that the ungrateful are in manifest error: *Say: He is The Merciful. We believed in Him and in Him we put our trust.* (67:29)

That God is mentioned here by His great attribute, the Lord of Grace, refers to His profound and infinite mercy which He grants to His Messenger and the believers who follow him. He will not destroy them as the ungrateful wish He would.

The chapter instructs the Prophet to highlight the bonds they have with their Lord, the Lord of Grace. The first is the bond of faith, in Him we believe and this is followed by one of total reliance, and in Him we place our trust. The phraseology of this sign suggests a close relation between them and God who favors His Messenger and the believers with the permission to announce this close relationship. Indeed, God instructs the Prophet to announce it, as if He is saying to him: Do not be afraid of what the ungrateful say. You and those with you are attached to Me, and you are permitted by Me to declare that you are the recipient of this honor, so announce it to them.' What a great gesture of honor!

This is followed by an implicit warning: *Then, you will know*

who he is, one who is clearly gone astray. (67:29) This is phrased in such a way that should make them ashamed of their stubborn rejection of the divine faith. It also invites them to review their positions, lest they be the ones who are in complete error. If they are, this inevitably makes them subject to painful suffering, as clearly stated in the previous sign: *Say: Considered you if God would cause me to perish and whoever is with me or had mercy on us, who will grant protection to the ones who are ungrateful from a painful punishment?* (67:28) At the same time, the chapter does not outrightly brand them as being in error, so as not to harden their attitude. This method of advocacy is one that works well with some people.

The chapter ends with a note that mentions punishment in this present life in the form of depriving the ungrateful of the most essential thing of life, namely, water: *Say: Considered you? If it came to be in the morning that your water be sinking into the ground, who approaches you with assistance from water springs?* (67:30)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions,** (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Learning and studying techniques

Your path for most effective learning is through knowing...

Visual/spatial learning
Learning, for visual-spatial learners, takes place all at once...

Learning as a student-athlete or student-performer
Indicators of a "kinesthetic intelligence" or body smarts...

Learning as an adult
Does higher education seem like a foreign culture to you?

Active learning
Active learning is experiential, mindful, and engaging...

Action learning
Action learning is a learning and problem-solving strategy for organizations...

Mathematical language learning strategies
In learning the language of mathematics, we follow the advice that practice make perfect, and patience a helpful virtue...

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:
I followed the guidelines below:

- Do your homework!
- Read critically; form your own opinions
- Review your notes
- from the previous lecture and reading for the day
- Communicate immediately with professors about any study problems

LESSON 78(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE

Known values of Quranic thinking include self-development (*jihad al-akbar*) and social improvement (*ummah* as a middle community). Both of these require the recognition of gaps between ideals and practice as the gap causes a loss of truth and consistency. This strategy of recognizing the gaps between facts and ideals is connected with developing integrity and good faith.

QURANIC CHAPTER 69: THE REALITY (AL-HAQQAH) SIGNS 69:1-69:37

Makkah: *The Reality!* (69:1)
What is The Reality? (69:2)
*And what would cause **you** to recognize*
what The Reality is? (69:3)
Makkah: Salih and the People of Thamud;
Hud and the People of Aad (69:4)
Makkah: Salih and the People of Thamud (69:5)
Makkah: Hud and the People of Aad (69:6)
Makkah: Hud and the People of Aad (69:7)
*Then, will **you** see of them any ones who endure?* (69:8)
Makkah: Moses and Pharaoh (69:9)
Makkah: Moses and Pharaoh (69:10)
Makkah: Moses and Pharaoh (69:11)
Makkah: Moses and Pharaoh (69:12)
Makkah: *And when the trumpet*
will be blown with one gust, (69:13)
and the earth and the mountains will be mounted,
then, will be ground to powder in one grinding, (69:14)
so on that Day will have come to pass
The Reality (69:15)
and the heaven will be split.
For on that day they will be
as ones who are frail, (69:16)
and the angels will be at its borders.
*The Throne of **your** Lord above them*
will be carried by eight on that Day. (69:17)
That Day you will be presented.
Your private matters will not be hidden. (69:18)
And for him who will be given his book in his right hand
he will say: Lo and behold! Recite my book! (69:19)
Truly, I thought that I would be

one who encounters my reckoning. (69:20)
And he will have a well-pleasing, pleasant life (69:21)
in a magnificent Garden. (69:22)
Its clusters, that which draws near. (69:23)
Eat and drink wholesomely for what you did in the past,
in the days, that which have gone by. (69:24)
But as for him who is given his book to his left he will say:
O would that I was not given my book, (69:25)
and that I was not informed of my reckoning! (69:26)
O would that my death had been my expiry! (69:27)
My wealth availed me not. (69:28)
Perished from me is my authority. (69:29)
It will be said: Take him and restrict him. (69:30)
Again, broil him in hellfire (69:31)
and after that in a chain of the length of seventy cubits.
So insert him in it. (69:32)
Truly, he had not been believing in God, The Sublime, (69:33)
nor did he urge food for the needy. (69:34)
This day he is not to have any loyal friend here (69:35)
and no food, but foul pus (69:36)
which none eat but ones of inequity. (69:37)

COMMENTARY°

The words used here, their very sound, meaning and construction contribute to this ambience. The chapter starts with one Arabic word, a*l-Haqqah*, translated here as The Reality. It is mentioned on its own as a subject that has no predicate. This is followed by a question that emphasizes the fact that the event referred to is extremely grave. This question is followed by the spreading of an air of mystery, so as to take the subject matter out of the area of mans knowledge: *And what would cause you to recognize what The Reality is?* (69:3) The chapter, however, does not answer the question. Instead, it leaves us stirring at this awesome event about which we know nothing. Indeed, we cannot know anything about it because it is beyond our knowledge.

All such devastation and catastrophe seems, however, to be exceedingly small when compared to the horrors of the Striker, the Inevitable Truth, which those ungrateful deny, even though they have seen what befell earlier communities that denied it. These fates, terrible catastrophes in their own right, are of a limited nature compared to the absolute calamity that the Striker brings about on the day to be witnessed by all. Having thus introduced this horror in general

terms, the chapter now portrays its details: (69:13-69:17)

We believe that there will be a single sounding of the trumpet and that this will be followed by these events. We do not know any details, however, because these events belong to a world about which we have no information except these texts. We have no other source to refer to. Moreover, no further details can add to the significance of these statements. To try to learn such details is a useless exercise which we are instructed not to resort to. When the trumpet is sounded once, a huge movement will take place: *And the earth and the mountains will be mounted, then, will be ground to powder in one grinding.* (69:14) The image of the earth and the mountains being lifted high and thrown so that they are crushed and levelled is absolutely terrifying. We walk over the earth in peace and reassurance, feeling that it is firm in its position. We look at the mountains and feel how stable and firmly placed they are. Yet both are lifted and sent crashing, as if they were a ball in a child's hand. How small we must feel, and how small is our world, compared with such great power.

What happens when all this takes place? It is the very thing the chapter is speaking about: *So on that Day will have come to pass The Reality.* (69:15) What is certain is the Day of Resurrection, which is called by many names such as *al-Haqqah, al-Qariah,* or *al-Waqiah* as if the certainty of its happening is part of its very nature. Using this last name here is deliberate, intended to give a particular impression countering all doubt and denial. Yet this is not all. The skies will also be seriously affected: *And the heaven will be split. For on that day they will be as ones who are frail,*(69:16) We do not know for certain to what the term the heaven refers to here, but this statement and similar ones referring to celestial events on that great day speak of a collapse of the order that keeps the universe functioning according to an accurate and fascinating plan. Once this perfect order collapses, all its different parts will be in chaos.

An air of majesty then spreads over the entire stage. All the sounds of the trumpet, the crashing, the rending asunder of stars then dies down, and we have an image of the Almighty's Throne: *The Throne of your Lord above them will be carried by eight on that Day.* (69:17) The angels are on all sides of the sky that has been torn and rent asunder, and the throne is there above them carried by eight of their number. Are they eight angels, or eight rows of angels, or eight classes, or some other eight known only to God? We do not know who or what they are, just as we do not know what the throne is like, or how it is carried. Knowledge of all these details has not been imparted to us, and God wants us to know of them only what He tells us. Therefore, we leave aside all details of these unknown matters

and concentrate instead on the majestic aura they impart to the whole scene. This is what we are meant to feel as the events of that awesome day are reported. *That Day you will be presented. Your private matters will not be hidden.* (69:18)

The chapter now presents two images, one of the winners and one of the losers. This is again done as though it is happening at this very instant: (69:19-69:24)

The account given here of these blessings includes some aspects of material comfort. This suited the state of those addressed by the Quran at the time. They were still newcomers to the Quranic message; it had not yet given its distinctive hue to their feelings, nor had they had the chance to appreciate luxuries higher than any material comfort: (69:21-69:24)

Such blessings and comforts are coupled with a special honor that is felt in the fact that the chapter makes its address directly to those deserving of it, saying to them to eat and drink as they please. This type of blessing is the one those who were the first to be addressed by the Quran could appreciate in the early stages of their new bond with God. Their feelings had not yet attained the sublime level that finds in being close to God what is much higher than any material comfort or luxury. Yet this type can satisfy the needs of many people across many generations. (69:25-69:37)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

Stimulate the students to ask questions about the Quranic signs.

Make the students comfortable when questioned so that they learn to value and master the questioning process.

Introduce questions in such a way that students come to see it as a way t o get to the heart of matters and understand things from a different point of view.

Do not negate or embarrass the students.

Make sure the atmosphere is one of mutual support and cooperation.

Question the students about their reasoning behind their ideas.

Why? If that is so, what follows? Are you assuming that...?
How do you know that? Is the point that you are making that... or, ...? For example? Is this an example of what you mean..., or this?
Can I summarize your point as ...? What is your reason for saying that?
What do you mean when using this word? Is it possible that...?
Are there other ways of looking at it?
How else could we view this matter?

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

What ideas or principles does the Quranic message clarify?
What Idea am I using in my thinking?
Is this idea causing problems for me or for others?
What is the main hypothesis you are using in your reasoning?
Are you using this term in keeping with established usage?
What main distinctions should we draw in reasoning through this?
What idea is the sacred text using in its thinking?
Is there a problem with it?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I asked myself how I would follow up with the question I asked. Doing that, I was able to answer what that told me about my question.

LESSON 78(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY

THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING

An essential requirement of critical thinking is the ability to think about thinking, to engage in what is sometimes called "metacognition." One possible definition of critical thinking is the art of thinking about your thinking while you're thinking in order to make your thinking better: more clear, more accurate, more fair. It is precisely at the level of "thinking about thinking" that most critical thinking stands in contrast to uncritical thinking. Critical thinkers can analyze thought—take it apart and put it together again. For the uncritical, thoughts are "just there". "I think what I think, don't ask me why." The analytical vocabulary in the English language (such terms as assume, infer, conclude, criteria, point of view: relevance: issue, elaborate, ambiguous, objection, support, bias, justify, perspective, contradiction, consistent, credibility, evidence, interpret, distinguish) enables us to think more precisely about our thinking. We are in a better position to assess reasoning (our own, as well as that of others) when we can use analytic vocabulary with accuracy and ease.

QURANIC EXAMPLES OF THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING

The Quran encourages thinking about thinking (metacognition). God commands us to reflect about something carefully so one may not jump to conclusions without critical insight. *Say: Journey through the earth; then, look on how He began the creation. Again, God will cause the last growth to grow. Truly, God is Powerful over everything.* (29:20)

God directs the attention of people to think by saying: Say to them. An example of the hundreds of "*Say*" signs: *Say: I admonish you in but one thing: That you stand up for God by twos and one by one. Again, reflect. There is not in your companion any madness. He is only a warner to you of a severe punishment in advance of you.* (34:46)

The Quran gives narratives of the past so that the people may think and reflect over them.

God tells us that the objective of so many stories which have been mentioned in various chapters is to motivate humanity to think and reflect in order to get lessons and to seek wisdom. *If We willed, We would have exalted him with them, but he inclined towards the earth, and followed his own desires. And his parable is like the parable of a dog. If you will attack it, it pants. Or if you will leave it, it pants. That is the parable of the folk, those who denied Our signs. Then, relate these narratives so that perhaps they will reflect.* (7:176)

In the field of *tawhid* and to direct human being's attention to the creator: *Truly, in the creation of the heavens and of the earth and the alteration of nighttime and daytime there are signs for those imbued with intuition, those who remember God while upright and sitting and on their sides and they re-*

flect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: Our Lord! You had not created this in vain. Glory be to You! Then, protect us from the punishment of the fire. (3:191-3:192)

To reflect upon the signs in the Quran: It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect. (38:29)

WHAT ARE THE OBSTACLES TO BEING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKERS?

Arrogance (*takabbur*): *The Messiah will never disdain that he be a servant of God nor the angels, the ones who are brought near to Him. Whoever disdains His worship and grows arrogant, He will assemble them altogether to Himself.* (2:34)

Traditionalism and Blind Following (*taashub* and *taqlid*): *When it was said to them: Follow what God caused to descend. They said: Nay! We will follow whatever we discovered our fathers were following on it—even though their fathers had been not at all reasonable—nor are they truly guided.* (2:170)

Giving the Lie to the Messages (*takzib*): *Devised he a lie against God or is there a madness in him? Nay! Those who believe not in the world to come there is a punishment and a going far astray.* (34:8)

Hypocrisy (*nifaq*): *They, those who say: Spend not on such ones who are with the Messenger of God until they break away. To God belongs the treasures of the heavens and the earth but the ones who are hypocrites understand not.* (63:7)

Ignorance and Not Being Aware of the Truth (*jahlu*): *Even if We sent down the angels to them and the dead spoke to them and we assembled everything against them, face to face, yet they would not believe unless God wills, except many of them are ignorant.* (6:111)

Lust and Desires (*hawa*): *Surely, He explained distinctly to you what He forbade to you unless you were driven by necessity to it. Truly, many cause others to go astray by their desires without knowledge. Truly, your Lord, He is greater in knowledge of the ones who exceed the limits.* (6:119)

Reliance on Conjecture, Opinion: *If you have obeyed most of who are on the earth, they will cause you to go astray from the way of God. They follow nothing but opinion and they only guess.* (6:116)

Turning Away from the Truth (*fasiqun*, ones who disobey): *O Prophet! Struggle with the ones who are ungrateful and the ones who are hypocrites and be you harsh against them. Their place of shelter will be hell. Miserable will be the Homecoming! They swear by God that they said not against the Prophet but, certainly, they said the word of ingratitude and they were ungrateful after their submission to God. They were about to do something that they never attain. They sought revenge but that God would enrich them and His Messenger with His grace. If they repent, it would be better for them. If they turn away, God will punish them with a painful punishment in the present*

and in the world to come. There is not for them on earth either a protector or a helper. (9:73-9:74)

QURANIC CHAPTER 69: THE REALITY (AL-HAQQAH) SIGNS 69:38-69:52

Makkah: *So I swear an oath*
by what you perceive (69:38)
and what you perceive not. (69:39)
Truly, it is the saying of a generous Messenger, (69:40)
and not the saying of a poet.
Little do you believe! (69:41)
Nor is it the saying of a soothsayer.
Little do you recollect! (69:42)
It is a sending down from the Lord of the worlds. (69:43)
And if he fabricated against Us some sayings, (69:44)
truly, We would have taken him by the right hand (69:45)
and, again, We would have severed his life-vein. (69:46)
And there is none of you who would be
ones who hinder Us from him. (69:47)
And, truly, it is an admonition
to ones who are God-conscious. (69:48)
And We well know that there are among you,
ones who deny. (69:49)
And, truly, it will be a regret
for ones who are ungrateful. (69:50)
And, truly, it is The Truth of certainty. (69:51)
So glorify the Name of your Lord, The Sublime. (69:52)

COMMENTARY°

So, no friend has he here today, nor any food except the filth that none other than the sinners eat. *This day he is not to have any loyal friend here and no food, but foul pus which none eat but ones of inequity.* (69:35-69:37)

This complements the announcement from on high concerning the fate of such a miserable person. Since he had no faith in God and did not encourage the feeding of the needy, he has no friends, and he is deprived of all favors. His food is the filth that pours out of the people of hell. Such is the food that serves well those hardened hearts that are devoid of all compassion. It is a type of food that *which none eat but ones of inequity.* (69:37) He is essentially one of the sinners.

THE QURANIC REVELATIONS

The chapter now makes a categorical statement defining the nature of the Quran recited by God s noble Messenger, but received by the Arabs with derision and ridicule: (69:38-69:43)

The statement is very clear, definite and certain. Therefore, it requires no oath to prove it or to confirm its source. It comes from the truth. It requires no further confirmation. *So I swear an oath by what you perceive and what you perceive not.* (69:38-69:39) This is an expression that imparts a sense of greatness to both the visible world and the world beyond. Needless to say, the universe is far greater than what people can say, and indeed what they can imagine. Indeed, all that humans can see and imagine is what they need to fulfil their role of building the earth, as God has willed placing them in charge of it. Within the great universe, their planet, the earth, is no more than a barely visible particle. Humans cannot go beyond what they are allowed to see and comprehend of this vast universe, its laws and secrets.

Thus, using its own tools, science has started to break through the prison walls of materialism to breathe the fresh air to which the Quran refers in statements:*So I swear an oath by what you perceive and what you perceive not.* (69:38-69:39) Yet in our own midst there are some who continue to try to close the windows with both their hands, to prevent the light from coming through, preferring to live in darkness. They do so in the name of science, without realizing that intellectually they lag behind science, and spiritually they lag behind religion. Moreover, they are backward, unable to move freely in pursuit of the truth. All this backwardness puts them in a position unworthy of man, the creature God has honored. (69:40-69:43)

Poetry has its musical beat and it may be full of fine and beautiful images, but it can never be confused with the Quran. There is a fundamental difference between the two. The Quran establishes a complete concept of life based on truth, a holistic approach and clear notions of God's existence, the universe and life. Poetry, on the other hand, is an expression of a series of charged reactions that rarely reflects a consistent vision of life and this in situations of pleasure and anger, freedom and restriction, love and hate, as well as other changing influences.

Furthermore, this consistent concept the Quran lays down is initiated in whole and in part by the Quran itself, and attributed to its divine source. Every aspect of this concept suggests that it is not of man's making. It is not in the nature of human beings that they should come up with a complete concept of the universe. They have never done so in the past, nor will they ever be able to do so. We have a

complete record of what human intelligence has come up with concerning the universe and the power that controls its system. It is all recorded in philosophical and intellectual works, as well as in poetry. When these are set side by side with the Quranic concept, it is clearly apparent that the latter is not the work of a human mind. It is of a unique status, one that distinguishes it from all that the human intellect can produce.

The same applies to soothsaying. Never in human history, up to the present moment, has a soothsayer produced a complete code of living like the one delineated in the Quran. All that soothsayers produce is limited to rhyming sentences containing some aspects of wisdom or ambiguous references.

Authoritative biographical works about the Prophet report several events when the elders of the Quraysh privately rejected this whole idea. Ibn Ishaq reports a meeting attended by a large number of Makkans and chaired, as it were, by al-Walid ibn al-Mughayrah, who was one of the more respected Quraysh elders. This was held shortly before the pilgrimage season and the idea was to agree an appropriate strategy:

In his opening address, al-Walid said: Now that the pilgrimage season is approaching, people will start arriving from all over the place. They must have heard about your friend [meaning the Prophet]. So you had better agree what to say when you are asked about him. We must guard against having too many opinions, particularly if they are mutually contradictory.

When his audience asked his advice as to what they should say, he preferred to listen to their suggestions first. What concerned al-Walid most was that the opinion they would come out with should take account of the fact that Muhammad was asking people to listen to the Quran, Gods message, expressed in beautiful language and powerful style. The description they would attach to Muhammad should also account for his persuasive, eloquent argument.

Descriptions like'fortune-teller, madman, poet and magician were proposed. None was considered convincing by al-Walid, who pointed out weaknesses in each, one after the other. He told his people that what Muhammad said was nothing like what was said by such men. When nobody could suggest anything more plausible, they asked al-Walid if he had a better suggestion.

He said: What Muhammad says is certainly beautiful. It is like a date tree with solid roots and rich fruit. Every one of these suggestions you have made is bound to be recognized as false. The least disputable one is to claim that he is a magician who repeats magic words which make a us fall out with our father, mother, wife and

clan. They all approved of al-Walid's suggestion and set about preparing their propaganda campaign to make the pilgrims wary of Muhammad and unwilling to meet him.

Another prominent Quraysh figure to speak out about the Quran was al-Nadr ibn al-Harith, when the Quraysh felt at a loss after having failed to win any compromise from the Prophet. He outlined their predicament in the following way:

People of Quraysh, you are confronted with a problem for which you have not been able to find a solution. When Muhammad was still a young man living among you, he won general admiration because he always spoke the truth and his honesty could not be faulted. When he had grown grey, and started to preach whatever he is preaching to you, you began to allege that he was a sorcerer. By God, he is no sorcerer. We have seen magicians and their tricks in the past. You also accused him of being a fortune teller. By God, he is not one, for we have seen fortune tellers and how they repeat their rhyming phrases. You also claimed that he was a poet. Again I say that, by God, he is not a poet, for we have seen poets and listened to all types of poetry. You claimed that he was also a madman, but he is far from being so. We have seen what madness has done to people, and how it causes them to say incoherent things. I say, people of Quraysh, you have to look at this question very carefully, for you have a big problem on your hands

The similarity between what the two prominent Quraysh figures state is almost complete. This is not surprising, considering their unresolved dilemma of how to deal with the Quran. We also mentioned in our discussion of the previous chapter, The Pen, how Utbah ibn Rabiah reacted to the Quran, when he tried to make some offers to the Prophet in the hope that he would stop advocating his message. When they alleged that Muhammad was a sorcerer or a soothsayer, that was nothing but a stratagem, crude at times and cunning at others. It only needed a little reflection to realize that it was all wrong. Therefore, there was no need for an oath of any sort to confirm that the Quran was the word of a noble Messenger and a revelation from on high.

The statement that the Quran is the word of a noble Messenger. This does not mean that it is of his own composition. It rather means that it is a different type of word, one not uttered by a poet or a soothsayer. It can only be said by a Messenger from God, carrying it from the One who sent him. What confirms this meaning is the word 'Messenger' being sent with it. He is neither a poet nor a soothsayer composing his own words alone or with the assistance of a jinn. This is further confirmed by the categorical statement that follows: *It is a*

sending down from the Lord of the worlds. (69:43)

As the chapter draws to its conclusion, it issues a terrifying threat to anyone who fabricates something about the very serious matter of faith. The threat is issued so as to affirm the only possible scenario of the Prophet being very truthful and honest in delivering the message entrusted to him. The proof is that God has not punished him severely as He would have done so had the Prophet been anything other than that: (69:44-69:47)

The import of these signs is confirmation that Muhammad only told them the truth. Had he invented something other than what was revealed to him from on high, God would have killed him in the way the signs describe. Since this did not take place, the inevitable conclusion is that he was truthful.

Yet this confirmation is given in a scene that goes much further than the actual statement, adding some fearsome connotations, action and life. We see here the violent, scary action of someone being seized by the right hand and his life-vein being cut. It makes a clear impression of Gods limitless power and humanitys utter weakness in comparison.

It adds a suggestion that this question of faith is so serious that it allows no complacency or leniency towards anyone, not even Muhammad in his close relation with God. Furthermore, these signs carry a strong beat, spreading an air of fear and submission to God.

The chapter concludes with a statement of the true nature of the Quran: (69:48-69:51)

This Quran reminds God-fearing hearts and they remember. The truth the Quran states is ingrained in people's hearts, but the reminder brings it to the fore in the minds of those who are God-fearing. Others continue to be preoccupied, unaware, and as such they benefit nothing by the reminder that this book, the Quran, provides. It is a fact that the God-fearing find in the Quran life, light, knowledge and remembrance, but none of these is experienced by other people.

In the face of all denials and rejection by the ungrateful, the Quran is indeed truth absolute. *And, truly, it is The Truth of certainty.* (69:51) It is not merely the truth, but the truth absolute, reconfirmed in absolute terms. In fact, every word in the Quran is profoundly true; every sign carries enough evidence that it originates with God, who Himself is the Truth.

At this point, an instruction is given from on high to the noble Messenger. It comes at the right time and during the right situation: *So glorify the Name of your Lord, The Sublime.* (69:52)

This is the most suitable action as it reflects acknowledgement of God's glory and mans position as God s servant. To glorify God

is the feeling that a believer experiences after the last statement explaining the nature of the Quran is given and after the long discussion of God Almighty's greatness.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

QURANIC CHALLENGES

Quranic references to concentrated and goal-oriented thinking provoked by the challenge to find something new or to solve a difficult problem (*tadabbur*) and the exercise of intellect occur in conjunction with basically five major themes:

Belief in the Oneness of God (*tawhid*)
Reflection on the Quran
The Human Being and the Universe
Historical Precedent
Thinking Itself

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I know that I cannot interpret information without ideas or concepts, or some way to give meaning.

I am able to find the key idea, the central concept of the signs.

I know the subject of the concept and its vocabulary.

I know that I think within a vocabulary.

I use these vocabulary terms because they are powerful tools for thinking.

LESSON 79(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PROPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED

What is an assumption? An assumptions is a conjecture, a guess, an opinion, a premise, a hypothesis of a thing that is accepted as true or as certain to happen, without proof. All human thought and action or experiences are based on assumptions. The thought process needs them in order to be able to move forward. The key is for students to be aware of them.

In understanding your own assumptions as you try to exercise Quranic thinking, you begin to realize that you can't figure out everything simultaneously. You have to make assumptions to figure something out. It is not possible to have many unanswered questions at the same time. The mind must make assumptions as it works to problem solve. It must take something for granted. You know that you can always question assumptions as you move forward in your thought process. At the same time, you should think about the assumptions that you are making. You should try to make them with some awareness by asking yourself: Do they make sense? You are in a better position to evaluate any reasoning or behavior when all of the elements of that reasoning or behavior are made explicit. You base both your reasoning and your behavior on beliefs you take for granted. You are often unaware of these assumptions. It is only by recognizing them that you can evaluate them.

Quranic thinkers have a passion for truth and for accepting the strongest reasoning. Thus, they have the intellectual courage to seek out and reject false assumptions of others. They realize that everyone makes some questionable assumptions. They are willing to question, and have others question, even their own most cherished assumptions. They consider alternative assumptions. They base their acceptance or rejection of assumptions on their rational scrutiny of them. They hold questionable assumptions with an appropriate degree of tentativeness. Independent thinkers evaluate assumptions for themselves, and do not simply accept the assumptions of others, even those assumptions made by everyone they know.

QURANIC CHAPTER 70: THE STAIRWAYS OF ASCENT (AL-MAARIJ)
SIGNS 70:1-70:35

Makkah: *One who supplicates asked*
for a punishment that will fall (70:1)
on the ones who are ungrateful
for which there will be no one to avert (70:2)
from God, the Possessor of the Stairways of Ascent. (70:3)
The angels and the Spirit go up to Him on a Day
whose measure had been fifty thousand years. (70:4)
So have you patience with a graceful patience. (70:5)

Truly, they see it as distant, (70:6)
but We see it as near at hand. (70:7)
On a Day the heaven will become as molten copper (70:8)
and the mountains be as wool clusters (70:9)
and no loyal friend will ask a loyal friend, (70:10)
although they are given sight of them.
One who sins would wish that he offer for ransom
—from the punishment of that day—his children (70:11)
or his companion wife, or his brother (70:12)
or his relatives who gave him refuge, (70:13)
or whoever is on the earth altogether,
again, if that would rescue him. (70:14)
No indeed. Truly, it is the furnace of hell (70:15)
removing their scalps, (70:16)
calling whoever drew back and turned away (70:17)
and gathered wealth and amassed. (70:18)
Truly, the human being was created fretful. (70:19)
When the worst afflicted him, he is impatient. (70:20)
And when the good afflicted him, begrudging. (70:21)
But the ones who formally pray, (70:22)
those, they are ones who continue
with their formal prayers (70:23)
and those who in their wealth
there is a known obligation towards (70:24)
the one who begs
and the one who is deprived (70:25)
and those who sincerely
validate the Day of Judgment. (70:26)
And those, they are ones who are apprehensive
of the punishment of their Lord. (70:27)
Truly, as to the punishment of their Lord,
there is no one who is safe from it. (70:28)
Those, they are ones who guard their private parts, (70:29)
but not from their spouses
or what their right hands possessed.
Truly, they are not ones who will be reproached. (70:30)
But whoever was looking beyond that, those,
they are ones who turn away. (70:31)
And those, they, who in their trusts
and to their compacts are ones who shepherd. (70:32)
And they, those are who, giving their testimony,
are ones who uphold. (70:33)
And those, they who over

their formal prayers are watchful. (70:34)
Those will be in Gardens, ones who are honored. (70:35)

COMMENTARY°

The inquirer has asked about a suffering which is hound to befall the ungrateful. Nothing can ward it off, as it comes from God, the Lord of the Ways of Ascent.*One who supplicates asked for a punishment that will fall on the ones who are ungrateful for which there will be no one to avert from God, the Possessor of the Stairways of Ascent.* (70:1-70:3)

The very concept of the hereafter was very difficult for the Arab polytheists to understand. They strongly resisted it. In fact they received it with so much amazement that they denied it outright. They further challenged the Prophet, in various ways, to bring it about or to define its timing. A report attributed to Ibn Abbas mentions that the person who asked the question quoted in the first sign of the chapter was al-Nadr ibn al-Harith. Another report quotes him as saying that the reference is to the question by the ungrateful about God's punishment, which is certain to engulf them.

Regardless of who the specific individual was the chapter reports that someone asked about this punishment, indeed, sought to hasten it, and further confirms that it is inevitable because it has been determined by God and that it will soon come. It states that no one can prevent its happening or ward it off. Therefore, to question or hasten it is ill-advised. Moreover, this punishment is to befall the ungrateful, in total, which means that those who question it are included like every other unbeliever. It is administered by God, *The Stairways of Ascent.*

Having absolutely confirmed the inevitability of such punishment, the chapter describes the day when it will take place, affirming that it will soon arrive. However, God's measure is different from humanity: *The angels and the Spirit go up to Him on a Day whose measure had been fifty thousand years. So have you patience with a graceful patience. Truly, they see it as distant, but We see it as near at hand.* (70:4-70:7)

The statement that the length of that day is fifty thousand years may be an expression of very long duration as is customary in Arabic idiom, or it may express a true fact meaning that the day in question is equal to fifty thousand of our years despite its being just a single day. We can easily imagine this considering that our earth days represent the length of time the earth takes to revolve once in position. There are stars, however, which take thousands of our days to revolve

once. This is not to say that this is what is meant here; we only state this to make it clear that the length of days can differ greatly.

If one of God's days is equal to fifty thousand of our years, then the punishment of the Day of Judgement is certainly close, according to Gods measure, even though people may think it far away. Therefore, God tells His Messenger to be patient with them: *Truly, they see it as distant, but We see it as near at hand.*(70:6-70:7) The order to remain patient is part of the divine message's essence; it is required of every messenger and every believer. This is fundamentally necessary because the burden is heavy and the task hard. It is vitally important to keep the believers united and content, looking to their ultimate goal.

God, who has bestowed this message from on high and has made this promise which the ungrateful hasten, determines events and their timings as He pleases, according to His overall plan for the universe. Human beings remain unaware of His will and plan; therefore, they hasten things. When time goes by without fulfilment of the promise, they begin to doubt. Worry may also be experienced by advocates of the divine message themselves. They too may entertain thoughts and desires that the promise be fulfilled soon. Therefore, they are given the following instruction so that they may remain firm: *So have you patience with a graceful patience.* (70:5) The address here is delivered to the Prophet so as to give him reassurance in the face of the opposition and rejection he faced. It also adds another truth here, highlighting the fact that God sees matters in a different way. He does not measure things by means of our small measures: *Truly, they see it as distant, but We see it as near at hand.* (70:6-70:7)

On the day when the sky will be like molten lead and the mountains like tufts of wool (70:8-70:14)

In the midst of this situation, the guilty hears something that closes the door to any fleeting hope. Indeed, all will listen to what makes the situation abundantly clear: (70:15-70:18)

There is absolutely no place for such impossible notions of escape, even though one would offer ones children, spouse, brothers, kinsfolk and everyone else in ransom. It rages on ready to burn, but it also tears the skin away, *removing their scalps.* (70:16) It tears the skin off both the face and head. Here, the fire is described as if it has a will of its own, deliberately taking part in inflicting punishment on the guilty: *Calling whoever drew back and turned away* (70:17) Those people who turned away when they were called upon to follow the truth embodied in the divine message are now called again. This time the caller is the raging fire, and this time they cannot turn away. In the past, they were busy amassing riches and hoarding them. Now

their attentions cannot be diverted from responding to this call by the raging fire. Nor can they divert it from themselves, no matter what they offer in ransom.

We are born with a restless disposition: when misfortune befalls us, we are fretful; and when good fortune comes our way, we grow tight-fisted. Not so those who pray, and always attend to their prayers; who give a due share of their possessions to the one who asks [for help] and the one who is deprived; who believe in the Day of Judgment; who stand in fear of their Lord's punishment, for none may feel totally secure from their Lord's punishment; who guard their chastity except with those joined to them in marriage, or those whom they rightfully possess—for then, they are free of all blame, whereas those who seek to go beyond that [limit] are indeed transgressors; who are faithful to their trusts and to their pledges; who stand up for the truth when they bear witness; and who attend to their prayers without fail. They are the ones to be honored in the gardens of paradise. (70:19-70:35)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

HOW ARE ASSUMPTIONS USED IN THE QURAN?

When students study Quranic concepts, there is something that they find in the signs that refer to assumptions people make. For example: *Assumes he that none has power over him? He says: I have caused abundant wealth to perish. Assumes he that none sees him? Make we not two eyes for him and a tongue and two lips and guided him to the two open highways? Yet he rushed not onto the steep ascent. What will cause you to recognize what the steep ascent is? It is the liberating of a bondsperson or feeding on a day possessing famine an orphan, possessor of kinship, or a needy, possessor of misery. Again, it had been among those who believed and counseled one another to having patience and counseled one another to clemency.* (90:5-90:17)

Much of what is wrong with human thought can be found in the uncritical or unexamined assumptions that underlie it. For example, students often experience the world in such a way as to assume that they are observing things just as they are, as though they were seeing the world without the filter of a

point of view. People they disagree with, of course, they recognize as having a point of view. *Say: Shall We tell you who will be ones who are losers by their actions? It is those whose endeavoring went astray in this present life while they assume that they are doing good by their handiwork.* (18:103-18:104)

One of the key dispositions of critical thinking is the on-going sense that as humans students always think within a perspective, that they virtually never experience things totally and absolutely. There is a connection therefore between thinking so as to be aware of their assumptions and being intellectually humble. *Assumed humanity that they will be left because they say: We believed and they will not be tried?* (29:2)

All reasoning must begin somewhere, must take some things for granted. Any 'defect' in the assumptions or presuppositions with which the reasoning begins is a possible source of problems. Assessing skills of reasoning involves assessing the ability to recognize and articulate their assumptions, again according to the relevant standards. *Assumed those who sought to do evil deeds that We will make them equal with those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality? Are their living and dying equal? How evil is the judgment they give!* (45:21)

A Quranic thinker's assumptions may be stated clearly or unclearly; the assumptions may be justifiable or unjustifiable, crucial or extraneous, consistent or contradictory. The feedback students receive from teachers on their ability to meet the relevant standards will be a large factor in the improvement of the Quranic student reasoning. *Or assumed you that you would enter the Garden while God knows not those who struggled among you and knows the ones who remain steadfast?* (3:142)

Assumptions usually operate at the subconscious or unconscious level of thought. Assumptions should be justified by sound evidence. *Assumes the human being that We will never gather his bones? Yea! We are ones who have power to shape his fingers again.* (75:3-75:10)]

Assume they that We hear not their secret thoughts and their conspiring secretly? Yea! Our messengers are near them writing down. (43:80)

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I frequently evaluated my listening.
I actively listening for main points.
I was able to summarize what my instructor said in my own words.
I was able to elaborate what is meant by key terms.

LESSON 79(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY GENERATING IMPLICATIONS, CONSEQUENCES

WHAT ARE IMPLICATIONS?

Implications follow from our thoughts.

WHAT ARE CONSEQUENCES?

Consequences follow from our actions.

REASONING WELL

The ability to reason well is measured in part by an ability to understand and enunciate the implications and, then, the consequences of the reasoning. For example: I think this or that. What does this thought imply? What would be the consequences if I were to act upon that thought?

IMPLICATIONS IN REASONING

When you spell out the implications of your reasoning:

Have you succeeded in identifying significant and realistic implications?

Have you confined yourselves to unimportant and unrealistic ones?

Have you enunciated the implications of your views clearly and precisely enough to permit your thinking to be evaluated by the validity of those implications?

Can you trace the implications and consequences that come from your reasoning?

QURANIC CHAPTER 70: THE STAIRWAYS OF ASCENT (AL-MAARIJ)

SIGNS 70:36-70:44

Makkah: *What is with those who were ungrateful*
—ones who run forward towards thee,
eyes fixed in horror, (70:36)
to the right and the left, tied in knots. (70:37)
Is not every man of them desirous of being caused
to enter into a Garden of Bliss? (70:38)
No indeed.
Truly, We created them out of what they know. (70:39)
So I swear an oath by the Lord of the rising places
and the setting places,
that We certainly are ones who have power (70:40)
to substitute better for them.
And We are not ones who are outrun. (70:41)

So let them engage in idle talk and play
until they encounter the Day of theirs
that they are promised, (70:42)
the Day when they will go forth swiftly
from their tombs as though they had been
hurrying to a goal (70:43)
with their sight, that which is humbled.
Abasement will come over them.
That is the Day which they had been promised. (70:44)

COMMENTARY°

The chapter then depicts a Makkan scene in which we see the ungrateful going hurriedly to where the Prophet was reading the Quran. Once there, they would split into groups around him. The chapter criticizes their hurrying and grouping when they had no intention of listening to or of heeding his advice: *What is with those who were ungrateful—ones who run forward towards you, eyes fixed in horror, to the right and the left, tied in knots.* (70:36-70:37)

There is implied sarcasm in the question. It describes their confused movement, with the Arabic expression adding a connotation of their being led. The question wonders at their confusion: they move hurriedly, but without any intention of receiving guidance. They only want to learn what the Prophet says before splitting into small groups discussing how to resist what they have heard. What is wrong with them, then? *Is not every man of them desirous of being caused to enter into a Garden of Bliss?* (70:38) How can they entertain such hopes when their behavior leads only to hell, and not to heaven and its gardens of bliss? Do they think that they have a high position with God to ensure that they will enter heaven despite the fact that they disbelieve in Him, oppose the Prophet, scheme against the Quranic message? They must imagine that they command very high value with God to achieve such elevation.

The answer is swift and decisive: *No indeed. Truly, We created them out of what they know.* (70:39) They are aware that they have been created from a humble fluid they know well enough. There is an implicit, yet profound touch here, destroying all their pride and arrogance without using a single objectionable word. Yet the sign is so expressed that it depicts a state of utter humiliation and ignominy. How can they hope to be in heaven when they disbelieve and commit evil deeds, knowing from what substance they are created? In Gods measure, they are too lowly to hold favor with Him. Why would He waive His law of administering justice to all according to their deeds

just for them?

Confirming their unimportance and lowly status, the chapter states that God is able to replace them with better creatures. Furthermore, they cannot escape the punishment their actions deserve: *So I swear an oath by the Lord of the rising places and the setting places, that We certainly are ones who have power to substitute better for them. And We are not ones who are outrun.* (70:40-70:41)

The point at issue needs no oath, but the mention of risings and settings reflects Gods greatness. These movements may refer to the rise risings and settings of the millions upon millions of stars in the universe. On the other hand, this may be a reference to sunrise and sunset over every point on our planet. At every moment, there is a sunrise and a sunset, as the earth continues to revolve. Whichever the meaning intended, the mention of these risings and settings gives us a feeling of the greatness of the universe and the Almightiness of God who created the universe. Do those people, created from humble fluid, need an oath by the Lord of all star risings and settings to realize that He is able to create better people? Do they need an oath confirming that they cannot escape from Him?

The chapter concludes with an address to the Prophet telling him to leave them to face their fate on that promised day. It shows their status then when they utterly distressed: (70:42-70:44)

This address implies a definite warning that should fill them with worry and anticipation. Indeed, the image describing them and their movements on that day should add intense fear. Moreover, it carries a clear element of sarcasm to parallel their pride and conceit. We see them coming out of their graves, hurrying on like people rallying to a flag or to a statue they worship. This is consistent with what they do in this life when they rally to flags and statues on festive days. Now they do the same, but there is no festivity on that day. Their description is completed by the statement, 'with ignominy overwhelming them.' We can almost see their faces clearly through these words. We see them humiliated, overwhelmed by ignominy. They used to play and indulge in idle talk, but now they are exhausted, broken: *Abasement will come over them. That is the Day which they had been promised.*(70:44) That is the day they doubted would ever happen. Yet in their denial, they tried to hasten its arrival.

Thus the chapter ends, with perfect harmony between its opening and end. It represents an episode in the long discussion of the major issue of resurrection, reckoning and requital, setting the Quranic concept of life in contrast with un-Quranic concepts.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Ask:

On what evidence is my conclusion based?
Where did I get the evidence?
How could I find out what other evidence exists?
What evidence supports opposing views?
Is the evidence sufficient or do I need more?
Is there reason to question this evidence?
What makes it questionable? Acceptable?
Does another view account for this evidence?

How would your rate yourself? Ask yourself:

Do I talk about what I have not yet done?
Why do I do so?
What evidence do I have?

INTERLUDE
THE NIGHT JOURNEY (AL-ISRA)
RAJAB 27, 1 BH/621 CE

HISTORY

And from his own narration on the authority of Ibn Abbas that he said regarding the interpretation of God's saying: *Glory be to Him Who caused His servant to set forth by night from the Masjid al-Haram to the Masjid al-Aqsa around which We blessed so that We cause him to see Our signs. Truly, He, He is The Hearing, The Seeing.* (17:1)

HISTORY

Then the Messenger was carried by night from the mosque at Makkah to the Masjid al-Aqsa, which is the temple of Aelia, when Islam had spread in Makkah among the Quraysh and all the tribes.[1]

It is pieced together in the story that follows, each one contributing something of what he was told about what happened when he was taken on the night journey. The matter of the place of the journey and what is said about it is a searching test and a matter of God's power and authority wherein is a lesson for the intelligent; and guidance and mercy and strengthening to those who believe.

It was certainly an act of God by which He took him by night in what way He pleased to show him His signs which He willed him t see so that he witnessed His mighty sovereignty and power by whic He does what He wills to do.

According to what I have heard Abd Allah ibn Masud used to say: Buraq, the animal whose every stride carried it as far as its eye could reach on which the Prophets before him used to ride was brought to the Messenger and he was mounted on it. His companion (Gabriel) went with him to see the wonders between heaven and earth, until he came to Jerusalem's temple.

There he found Abraham the friend of God, Moses, and Jesus assembled with a company of the Prophets, and he prayed with them. Then he was brought three vessels containing milk, wine, and water respectively.

The Messenger said: I heard a voice saying when these were offered to me: If he takes the water, he will be drowned and his people also; if he takes the wine, he will go astray and his people also; and if he takes the milk, he will be rightly guided and his people also. So I took the vessel containing milk and drank it.

Gabriel said to me, You have been rightly guided and so will

your people be, Muhammad.

I was told that al-Hasan said that the Messenger said: While I was sleeping in the *hijr,* Gabriel came and stirred me with his foot. I sat up but saw nothing and lay down again. He came a second time and stirred me with his foot. I sat up but saw nothing and lay down again. He came to me the third time and stirred me with his foot. I sat up and he took hold of my arm and I stood beside him and he brought me out to the door of the mosque and there was a white animal, half mule, half donkey, with wings on its sides with which it propelled its feet, putting down each forefoot at the limit of its sight and he mounted me on it. Then he went out with me keeping close to me.

I was told that Qatada said that he was told that the Messenger said: When I came up to mount him, he shied.

Gabriel placed his hand on its mane and said: Are you not ashamed, O Buraq, to behave in this way? By God, none more honorable before God than Muhammad has ever ridden you before.

The animal was so ashamed that he broke out into a sweat and stood still so that I could mount him.

In his story al-Hasan said: The Messenger and Gabriel went their way until they arrived at the temple at Jerusalem. There he found Abraham, Moses, and Jesus among a company of the Prophets. The Messenger acted as their leader in formal prayer.

Then he was brought two vessels, one containing wine and the other milk. The Messenger took the milk and drank it, leaving the wine.

Gabriel said: You have been rightly guided to the way of nature and so will your people be, Muhammad. Wine is forbidden you.

Then the Messenger returned to Makkah and in the morning he told Quraysh what had happened. Most of them said: By God, this is a plain absurdity!

A caravan takes a month to go to Syria and a month to return and can Muhammad do the return journey in one night ? Many Muslims gave up their faith; some went to Abu Bakr and said: What do you think of your friend now, Abu Bakr? He alleges that he went to Jerusalem last night and prayed there and came back to Makkah. He replied that they were lying about the Messenger; but they said that he was in the mosque at that very moment telling the people about it. Abu Bakr said: If he says so then it is true.

And what is so surprising in that? He tells me that communications from God from heaven to earth come to him in an hour of a day or night and I believe him, and that is more extraordinary than that at which you boggle!

He then went to the Messenger and asked him if these reports were true. When he said they were, he asked him to describe Jerusalem to him. Al-Hasan said that he was lifted up so that he could see the Messenger speaking as he told Abu Bakr what Jerusalem was like. Whenever he described a part of it he said: That's true. I testify that you are the Messenger of God until he had completed the description, and then the Messenger said: And you, Abu Bakr, are the Siddiq. This was the occasion on which he got this honorific title.

Al-Hasan continued: God sent down concerning those who left Islam for this reason: We made the vision which we showed you only for a test to men and the accursed tree in the Quran. We put them in fear, but it only adds to their heinous error. Such is al-Hasan's story with additions from Qatada.

One of Abu Bakr's family told me that Ayisha, the Prophet's wife, used to say: The Messenger's body remained where it was but God removed his spirit by night.

Yaqub ibn Utba ibn al-Mughayrah ibn al-Akhnas told me that Muawiya ibn Abu Sufyan when he was asked about the Messenger's night journey said: It was a true vision from God.

What these two latter said does not contradict what al-Hasan said, seeing that God Himself said: We made the vision which we showed thee only for a test to men; nor does it contradict what God said in the story of Abraham when he said to his son: O my son, verily I saw in a dream that I must sacrifice you, and he acted accordingly. Thus, as I see it, revelation from God comes to the Prophets waking or sleeping.

I have heard that the Messenger used to say: My eyes sleep while my heart is awake. Only God knows how revelation came and he saw what he saw. But whether he was asleep or awake, it was all true and actually happened.

Al-Zuhri alleged as from Said ibn al-Musayyab that the Messenger described to his companions Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, as he saw them that night, saying: I have never seen a man more like myself than Abraham.

Moses was a ruddy faced man, tall, thinly fleshed, curly haired with a hooked nose as though he were of the Shanua. Jesus, Son of Mary, was a reddish man of medium height with lank hair with many freckles on his face as though he had just come from a bath. One would suppose that his head was dripping with water, though there was no water on it. The man most like him among you is Urwa ibn Masud al-Thaqafi.

The following report has reached me from Umm Hani bint Abu Talib, whose name was Hind, concerning the Messenger's night jour-

ney.

She said: The Messenger went on the night journey while he was in my house. He slept that night in my house, the house of my father, Abu Talib. He prayed the final night prayer, then he slept and we slept. A little before dawn the Messenger woke us, and when we had prayed the dawn formal prayer he said: O Umm Hani, I offered the formal prayed with you the last evening prayer in this valley as you saw. Then I went to Jerusalem and prayed there. Then I have just prayed the morning formal prayer with you as you see.

He got up to go out and I took hold of his robe and laid bare his belly as though it were a folded Egyptian garment. I said: O Prophet of God, don't talk to the people about it for they will give you the lie and insult you.

He said: By God, I certainly will tell them.

I said to a slave of mine: Follow the Messenger and listen to what he says to the people, and what they say to him. He did tell them and they were amazed and asked what proof he had. He replied that he had passed the caravan of so-and-so in such-and-such a valley and the animal he bestrode scared them and a camel bolted, and I showed them where it was as I was on the way to Syria. I carried on until in Dajanan. I passed by a caravan of the so-and-so clan. I found the people asleep. They had a jar of water covered with something. I took the covering off and drank the water replacing the cover. The proof of that is that their caravan is this moment coming down from al-Baida by the pass of al-Tanim led by a dusky camel loaded with two sacks one black and the other multihued.

The people hurried to the pass and the first camel they met was as he had described. They asked the men about the vessel and they told them that they had left it full of water and covered it and that when they woke it was covered but empty. They asked the others too who were in Makkah and they said that it was quite right: they had been scared and a camel had bolted, and they had heard a man calling them to it so that they were able to recover it.

THE ASCENT TO HEAVEN

One whom I have no reason to doubt told me on the authority of Abu Saied al-Khudri: I heard the Messenger say. After the completion of my business in Jerusalem, a ladder was brought to me finer than any I have ever seen. It was that to which the dying man looks when death approaches. My companion mounted it with me until we came to one of the gates of heaven called the Gate of the Watchers. An angel called Ishmael was in charge of it, and under his command were twelve thousand angels each of them having twelve thousand

angels under his command.

As he told this story that the Messenger used to say: And none knows the armies of God but He. *And none knows the armies of your Lord but He.* (74:31)

When Gabriel brought me in, Ishmael asked who I was, and when he was told that I was Muhammad he asked if I had been given a mission, and on being assured of this he wished me well.

A traditionist who had got it from one who had heard from the Messenger told me that the latter said: The angels who met me when I entered the lowest heaven smiled in welcome and wished me well except one who said the same things but did not smile or show that joyful expression which the others had. And when I asked Gabriel the reason he told me that if he had ever smiled on anyone before or would smile on anyone hereafter he would have smiled on me; but he does not smile because he is Malik, the Keeper of Hell. I said to Gabriel, he holding the position with regard to God which he has described to you: *One who is obeyed and, again, trustworthy.* (81:21)

Will you not order him to show me hell?

And he said: Certainly!

O Malik, show Muhammad Hell.

Thereupon he removed its covering and the flames blazed high into the air until I thought that they would consume everything. So I asked Gabriel to order him to send them back to their place which he did. I can only compare the effect of their withdrawal to the falling of a shadow, until when the flames retreated whence they had come, Malik placed their cover on them.

In his tradition Abu Said al-Khudri said that the Messenger said: When I entered the lowest heaven I saw a man sitting there with the spirits of men passing before him. To one he would speak well and rejoice in him saying: A good spirit from a good body, and of another he would say: Faugh! and frown, saying: An evil spirit from an evil body.

In answer to my question Gabriel told me that this was our father Adam reviewing the spirits of his offspring; the spirit of a believer excited his pleasure, and the spirit of an infidel excited his disgust so that he said the words just quoted.

Then I saw men with lips like camels. In their hands were pieces of fire like stones which they used to thrust into their mouths and they would come out of their posteriors. I was told that these were those who sinfully devoured the wealth of orphans.

Then I saw men in the way of the family of Pharaoh: *And on a Day when the Hour is secure it is said: Cause the people of Pharaoh to enter the severest punishment.* (40:46) with such bellies as I have

never seen. There were passing over them as it were camels maddened by thirst when they were cast into hell, treading them down, they being unable to move out of the way. These were the usurers.

Then I saw men with good fat meat before them side by side with lean stinking meat, eating of the latter and leaving the former. These are those who forsake the women which God has permitted and go after those he has forbidden.

Then I saw women hanging by their breasts. These were those who had fathered bastards on their husbands. Jafar ibn Amr told me from al-Qasim ibn Muhammad that the Messenger said: Great is God's anger against a woman who brings a bastard into her family. He deprives the true sons of their portion and learns the secrets of the forbidden.

To continue the tradition of Said al-Khudri: Then I was taken up to the second heaven and there were the two maternal cousins Jesus, son of Mary, and Yahya (John), son of Zechariah. Then to the third heaven and there was a man whose face was as the moon at the full. This was my brother Joseph, son of Jacob. Then to the fourth heaven and there was a man called Idris. And we have exalted him to a lofty place. Then to the fifth heaven and there was a man with white hair and a long beard, never have I seen a more handsome man than he. This was the beloved among his people Aaron, son of Imran. Then to the sixth heaven, and there was a dark man with a hooked nose like the Shanua. This was my brother Moses, son of Imran. Then to the seventh heaven and there was a man sitting on a throne at the gate of the immortal mansion.

Every day seventy thousand angels went in not to come back until the Day of Resurrection. Never have I seen a man more like myself. This was my father Abraham. Then he took me into Paradise and there I saw a damsel with dark red lips and I asked her to whom she belonged, for she pleased me much when I saw her, and she told me: Zayd ibn Haritha. The Messenger gave Zayd the good news about her.

From a tradition of Abd Allah ibn Masud from the Prophet there has reached me the following: When Gabriel took him up to each of the heavens and asked permission to enter he had to say whom he had brought and whether he had received a mission and they would say: God grant him life, brother and friend! until they reached the seventh heaven and his Lord. There the duty of fifty prayers a day had been made obligatory upon him.

The Messenger said: On my return I passed by Moses and what a fine friend of yours he was! He asked me how many formal prayers had been made obligatory.

I told him fifty.

He said; Formal prayer is a weighty matter and your people are weak, so go back to your Lord and ask him to reduce the number for you and your community.

I did so and He took off ten.

Again I passed by Moses and he said the same again; and so it went on until only five formal prayers for the whole day and night were left. Moses again gave me the same advice.

I replied that I had been back to my Lord and asked him to reduce the number until I was ashamed, and I would not do it again. He of you who performs them in faith and trust will have the reward of fifty prayers.[1]

Makkah: *Glory be to Him Who made His servant*
journey by night
from the Masjid al-Haram to the Masjid al-Aqsa
around which We have blessed
so that We cause him to see Our Signs.
Truly He is The Hearing, The Seeing. (17:1)

COMMENTARY°

The chapter begins with glorifying God, the most fitting action to confirm the bond between God and His servants in the atmosphere of compassion and friendliness imparted by the mention of the night journey: *Glory be to Him Who caused His servant to set forth night from the Masjid al-Haram to the Masjid al-Aqsa around which We blessed so that We cause him to see Our signs. Truly, He, He is The Hearing, The Seeing.* (17:1)

The chapter emphasizes the position of the human being as God's servant: The emphasis here is needed in the context of the Prophet's ascension to heaven where no human being had gone before. It is important in this context that the status of human servitude to God should always be remembered. In its simplicity and purity, Islam insists that no similarity could ever exist between God and any creature.

The Arabic text of this opening verse uses the verb which denotes 'traveling during the night'. It is sufficient then to use this verb to denote the time of the action. Yet the verse adds the phrase, *laylan*, or 'by night', to give an added sense of the still night and the ease of travel. The journey from the Sacred Mosque to the Aqsa Mosque was one chosen by God, the Compassionate, who knows everything. It provided a link between all monotheistic faiths from the time of Abraham and Ishmael to the time of the last Prophet, Muhammad. It

also established a link between the holy places in all these religions. It seems that this unusual journey served as an announcement that the last Messenger was the heir to the heritage of all former Messengers. His message staked a claim to all these holy places. Thus it becomes a journey that goes beyond the scope of time and place.

The opening verse describes the Aqsa Mosque as one with blessed environs. This description shows the blessings surrounding the mosque and flowing in abundance. This impression could not have been given with a direct description such as 'the mosque which we have blessed. This is another example of the refined use of language characteristic of the Quran.

The Prophet's night journey was a telling sign, and it was accompanied by others, as the opening verse says in stating its purpose: so that We might show him some of Our signs. Covering the distance between the Sacred Mosque in Makkah and the Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, in a very short period that did not allow the Prophet's bed to become cold, is a sign of God's power, whatever the means used to accomplish it. It opens our minds to new horizons in the universe and reveals latent potentials within humanity. It shows that those human beings chosen by God to be the bearers of His message have the latent ability to receive whatever greater powers God wishes to give them. It is God who has honored man, giving him a favored position among His creation, and endowed him with such potentials. *Glory be to Him Who caused His servant to set forth by night from the Masjid al-Haram to the Masjid al-Aqsa around which We blessed so that We cause him to see Our signs. Truly, He, He is The Hearing, The Seeing.* (17:1) He indeed hears and sees all that is beyond the reach of our hearing and seeing faculties.

It is especially impressive that the opening verse of this chapter starts with glorifying God. After defining the purpose of this journey, it finishes with highlighting two of God's attributes, perfect hearing and seeing that encompass all things. This quick movement across purposes reflects the finest points of the expression used. The glorification is addressed to God Himself, and the statement about the purpose of the night journey comes from Him, while the description of God's powers is made in the form of an indisputable statement. All these forms are combined in one verse so as to give their different imports.

The night journey is a remarkable sign which God wished to demonstrate. It is an amazing journey by human standards. The Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, which was the destination of the first part of this journey, is at the heart of the Holy Land which God assigned to the Children of Jacob before He caused them to be driven out of it.

LESSON 80(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY GENERATING OR ASSESSING SOLUTIONS

Quranic critical thinkers ask questions to reach solutions. They try to find the best solution they can by evaluating solutions through comparing them to each other. Thus, it is not an evaluation independent of the various issues, but by comparing the various possibilities. They are not hasty. They examine a problem or issue at length. Quranic thinkers are also known as creative thinkers, thinkers who generate various possible solutions in order to find the best one. It may be that an issue or problem persists because the best possible answer has not as yet been found. As a result, Quranic creative thinkers use all the information that the Quranic signs give them relevant to that particular issue or problem. Solutions are implied in many of the implications that the Quranic signs give. Once students become familiar with the implications present in various Quranic signs, they develop a certain flexibility and imagination in trying to solve problems even going so far as trying new types of solutions. As Quranic creative thinkers they are fair-minded. They take the interests of others into account when generating solutions. They are realistic in their approach not seeking a solution that they want, but finding the best solution possible.

QURANIC CHAPTER 78: THE TIDING (AL-NABA)

SECTION 1 (78:1-78:30): THE DAY OF DECISION

Makkah: *About what demand you*
of one another? (78:1)
Of the sublime tiding (78:2)
about which they are ones who are at variance in it? (78:3)
No indeed! Soon they will know. (78:4)
Again, no indeed! Soon they will know. (78:5)
Make We not the earth for a cradling (78:6)
and the mountains as stakes? (78:7)
And We created not you in pairs (78:8)
and We made your sleep as a rest. (78:9)
And We made the nighttime as a garment. (78:10)
And We made the daytime for you to earn a living. (78:11)
And We built over you seven superior ones. (78:12)
And We made a bright, light-giving lamp. (78:13)
And We caused to descend
that which are clouds bringing rain, water cascading, (78:14)
with which We bring about grain and plants (78:15)
and luxuriant Gardens. (78:16)
Truly, the Day of Decision would be a time appointed, (78:17)
a Day the trumpet is blown. Then, you approach in units (78:18)

and the heaven will be let loose and will be all doors. (78:19)
And the mountains will be set in motion
and will be as vapor. (78:20)
Truly, hell will be on the watch, (78:21)
a destination for the ones who are defiant, (78:22)
one who lingers in expectation in it for many years. (78:23)
They experience in it not any coolness nor any drink, (78:24)
but scalding water and filth, (78:25)
a suitable recompense! (78:26)
Truly, they had been not hoping not for a reckoning (78:27)
and they denied Our signs with a denial. (78:28)
But We counted everything in a Book. (78:29)
Experience it! We will never increase you
but in punishment. (78:30)

COMMENTARY°

The chapter opens by shunning the enquirers and the enquiry. It wonders that anyone should raise doubts about resurrection and judgement, which were central points of bitter controversy. For the ungrateful could hardly imagine that resurrection were possible, despite the fact that it is most logical. The chapter asks what they are talking about: About what are they asking? *About what demand you of one another?* (78:1) We are then given the answer. The question is not meant to solicit information but rather draws attention to the subject of their questions and stating its nature: *Of the sublime tiding about which they are ones who are at variance in it?* (78:2-78:3) The answer does not name the event but describes it to enhance the feeling of wonder and amazement at such people. The dispute was between those who believed in resurrection and those who denied it, but the questions were raised by the latter only.

The chapter does not provide any more details about the event in question. It simply describes it as great before adding an implicit threat which is much more frightening than a direct answer. *No indeed! Soon they will know. Again, no indeed! Soon they will know.* (78:4-78:5) The phrase, 'no indeed,' is used here as the nearest possible rendering of the Arabic term, kalla, which denotes strong shunning. The whole sentence is repeated to add force to the threat implied.

We are then taken on a quick round of the universe in which we see a multitude of scenes, creatures and phenomena. Contemplation of which strongly shakes any human heart: (78:6-78:16)

In this round we traverse the vast universe, observing a great

multitude of scenes and phenomena, which are sketched out with great economy of words. This helps make the rhythm sharp and penetrating, like an incessant hammering. The form of questioning implying a statement is also used here deliberately. It may be likened to a strong hand shaking those who are still unaware. It draws their attention to all these creatures and phenomena which provide strong evidence of the deliberate planning and designing which go into their creation, the ability to create and re- create, and the wisdom behind creation, which dictates that no creature will be left out of the great reckoning. Therefore, we come back to the fateful tiding, the subject of the argument.

The first leg in this round takes us across the earth and the mountains: *Make We not the earth for a cradling and the mountains as stakes?* (78:6-78:7) Both facts mentioned here can be easily recognized and appreciated by everyone. Indeed, even primitive we can be affected by them once our attention is drawn to them.

In its second leg, this round touches upon various aspects of human existence: *And We created not you in pairs.* (78:8) Again, this is a well established phenomenon, easily recognized by every human being. God has made the survival and continuity of humanity conditional on each of the two different sexes, male and female, playing its role in life fully. Not much knowledge is required to appreciate what this involves of comfort, pleasure and recreation. Therefore the Quranic statement stands to be appreciated by every generation in every society according to its abilities and knowledge.

God has willed that sleep should overpower a person. *and We made your sleep as a rest. And We made the nighttime as a garment. And We made the daytime for you to earn a living.* (78:9-78:11) and make him lose consciousness and activity. When asleep, we are in a state which is unlike life and unlike death. It ensures rest for our body and mind and compensates both for whatever effort we have exerted during wakefulness. All this happens in a way the true nature of which we cannot conceive. Our will plays no part in it and it is impossible for us to discover how it happens. When awake, we do not know our condition while we are asleep. We are also unable, when asleep, to observe our condition and how sleep affects us. It is one of the secrets of our constitution and of all living creatures, unknown except to the Creator Who has made sleep essential for life. For there is no living creature who can stay without sleep except for a limited period. If we were forced, by external means, to stay awake, we would certainly die.

The final leg of this round touches on the creation of heaven: (78:12-78:16) The seven mighty ones God has built above the earth

are the seven heavens or skies, the precise nature of which is known only to God. They may be seven galaxies which have a bearing on our planet or on our solar system. The phrase may also refer to something else that is unknown to us. What we know for certain, however, is that these seven have a strong constitution and do not easily disintegrate. This much we know about the stars and we observe in what we call 'the sky'. The chapter also points out that the construction of the seven mighty ones is in perfect harmony with the creation of the earth and the world of man. This is implied in the following signs: *And We made a bright, light-giving lamp.* (78:13) This is a reference to the sun which shines and gives the heat necessary for the earth and its living creatures. It also plays an important part in forming the clouds by evaporating sea water: *And We caused to descend that which are clouds bringing rain, water cascading.* (78:14) The Arabic text refers to these clouds as something squeezable. But who squeezes them to extract their juice? The winds, maybe, or perhaps some kind of electric charge in the atmosphere! Beyond both types, however, there is the hand of the Designer, who has assigned to everything in the universe its respective qualities.

The use of the word 'lamp' to refer to the sun is very apt, for a lamp gives heat and light. It also shines as if it is ablaze. The heat and the light provided by the sun combine with the water flowing in abundance, time after time, from the 'squeezable' clouds to help the seeds send out their shoots. This is how grains, vegetables, bushes and wide-branching trees grow. This consonance in the design of the universe could not have been achieved without God's careful planning. Any person can appreciate this if his attention is drawn to it. If he acquires advanced knowledge, he finds even more consonance and congruity in the universe, which leaves him wondering in complete amazement. He then finds completely insupportable the argument that all this is the result of coincidence. He considers those who evade admitting the fact of elaborate and conscious planning pigheaded and unworthy of respect.

All this has been for work and pleasure, but there are reckoning and reward to follow, on the appointed day: *Truly, the Day of Decision would be a time appointed, a Day the trumpet is blown. Then, you approach in units and the heaven will be let loose and will be all doors. And the mountains will be set in motion and will be as vapor.* (78:17-78:20) Creation is not without purpose. The Creator, who has accurately measured human life and carefully provided perfect harmony between it and the universe, will not let people just live and die in vain. Reason cannot accept that those who do good and the evildoers should both end in dust. The rightly-guided and the

straying folk, the just and the tyrants cannot all share the same fate. There must be a day when everything is judged and evaluated. The day is appointed by God: *Truly, the Day of Decision would be a time appointed.* (78:17)

It is a day when upheaval overtakes the universe and destroys its systems. *A Day the trumpet is blown. Then, you approach in units and the heaven will be let loose and will be all doors. And the mountains will be set in motion and will be as vapor.* (78:18-78:20) The 'Trumpet' is a kind of horn of which we know nothing except its name and that it will be blown. We need not waste our time trying to discover how, for such discovery will not strengthen our faith.

God has revealed to us what we need to know of the secrets of the universe so that we may not waste our energy in the futile pursuit of useless knowledge. We can imagine, however, a blast on a Trumpet which people answer by arriving in droves. We can visualize the scene whereby all the generations of humanity rise up, walking in their multitudes, from all directions, to attend the great reckoning. We can imagine the fearful sight of people rising from their graves and the great, huge, endless crowd they form. We can feel the horror of the day, people's helplessness and fear. We do not know where all this will happen, nor when, for the universe is full of great events: *And the heaven will be let loose and will be all doors. And the mountains will be set in motion and will be as vapor.* (78:19-78:20)

The chapter takes another step, beyond resurrection, to describe the fate of the tyrant ungrateful and also that of the God-conscious It begins with the former group who raise doubts about the fatef tiding: (78:21-78:30)

Hell has been created so that it may watch the tyrants and tran gressors and await their arrival. They find it well prepared to receive them, as if they are returning to their natural home after having sojourned on earth a while. It is a home in which they stay endlessly. (78:24) The next sign provides an exception to this, but the exception is even worse: (78:25) Their throats and stomachs bum as they drink the boiling fluid, which is the only 'coolness' they have, while their other drink is the filth of the burning bodies, decaying in the enormous heat. The Quran comments that this is 'a fitting recompense'. It is in keeping with what they have done in their lives. For they thought they would never return to God: (78:27-28) Their denial, as the Arabic sign suggests, is strongly emphatic and stubbornly upheld. But God keeps a meticulous record which does not leave out anything they do or say: (78:29) Then follows a reproach coupled with the tiding that they can hope for no change in their condition and no abatement of its intensity: (78:30)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Try to answer the following questions based on the signs you have just studied:

What other solutions can you think of?
What are their advantages and disadvantages?
Are we missing any relevant facts?
Is there anything we need to find out before we can decide which solution is best?
What are the criteria for judging solutions in this case?
How will we know if a solution is a good one?
Why do people/have people behaved in the ways that cause the problem?
Can you think of other cases of this problem or similar problems?
How did the people involved try to solve them?
What results did that have?
Could we use the same solution, or is our case different in an important way?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities

ASK YOURSELF:

What do you think is the main issue in each of the Quranic examples?
Let me see if I understand you; do you mean x or y?
How does this relate to our discussion (problem, issue)?
Could you give me an example?
Would this be an example?
Could you explain that further?
Would you say more about ht?
Why do you say that?
What do you think so-and-so meant by his remark?:

LESSON 80(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
EXPLORING IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

Critical thinkers can take statements, recognize their implications (i.e., if x is true, then y must also be true) and develop a fuller, more complete understanding of their meaning. They realize that to accept a statement one must also accept its implications. They can explore both implications and consequences at length. When considering beliefs that relate to actions or policies. critical thinkers assess the consequences of acting on those beliefs.

QURANIC CHAPTER 78: THE TIDING (AL-NABA)
SECTION 1 (78:31-78:40): THE DAY OF DECISION

Makkah: *Truly, for the ones who are God-conscious,*
there is a place of security, (78:31)
fertile gardens and grapevines, (78:32)
and full breasted maidens of the same age (78:33)
and a cup overflowing. (78:34)
No idle talk will they hear in it nor any denial, (78:35)
*a recompense from **your** Lord, a gift, a reckoning.* (78:36)
from the Lord of the heavens and the earth
and of whatever is between them,
The Merciful.
against Whom they possess no argument. (78:37)
On a Day when the Spirit
and the angels will stand up ranged in rows
They will not assert themselve.
but he to whom the Merciful gave permission
and who said what is correct. (78:38)
That is the Day of The Truth; so whoever willed
took his Lord to himself as the destination. (78:39
We warned you of a near punishment on a Day
when a man will look on what his hands put forward
and the ones who are ungrateful will say:
O would that I had been earth dust! (78:40)

COMMENTARY°

We then have the corresponding scene of the God-conscious in complete bliss. *Truly, for the ones who are God-conscious, there is a place of security, fertile gardens and grapevines, and full breasted maidens of the same age and a cup overflowing.No idle talk will they hear in it nor any denial, a recompense from **your** Lord, a gift, a reckoning.* (78:31-78:36) If hell is a vigilant watch guard which the tyrants cannot escape, the God-conscious, the God-fearing will end

in a place of security. What a place it is: *Fertile gardens and grapevines.* (78:32) The vine tree is specifically mentioned because it is well known to the addressees. The God-fearing will also have companions who are described here as high-bosomed and of equal age. They also drink from a cup overflowing with refreshing beverage.

These luxuries are given a physical description so that we may better appreciate them. The precise nature of these luxuries and how they may be enjoyed remain unknown to us as our understanding is restricted by our limited world. But the enjoyment provided to the God-conscious is not purely physical. *A recompense from **your** Lord, a gift, a reckoning.* (78:36)

The chapter closes with the final scene of the day when all this happens. It is a scene in which we see the angel Gabriel, who is the Holy Spirit, and all the angels standing in ranks before God, their Most Merciful Lord. They stand in awe of Him; no one dares utter a word without prior permission from Him. (78:37-78:38)

The recompense given to the God-conscious and to the tyrant transgressors, which was detailed in the previous section, is from your Lord. *From the Lord of the heavens and the earth and of whatever is between them, The Merciful, against Whom they possess no argument.* (78:37) What a befitting context to reaffirm the eternal truth of God. God is the Supreme Lord of man, the heavens and earth, this life and the next, who metes out reward for God-consciousness and punishment for transgression and tyranny. But above all He is the Most Gracious. The reward He assigns to each group is a manifestation of His mercy. Even the torment endured by the transgressors originates from God's mercy. For it is indeed part of mercy that evil should be punished and that it should not have the same end as good.

The other divine attribute implied here is majesty: *from the Lord of the heavens and the earth and of whatever is between them, The Merciful, against Whom they possess no argument.* (78:37) In this awesome situation neither the human being nor angel can speak without permission from the Most Gracious. Whatever is said will be right because He does not permit anyone to speak whom He knows will not be saying what is right.

When we think that the angels, who are favored by God, and absolutely pure from sin, stand silent in front of God and dare not speak without His permission, we are bound to feel how awesome the atmosphere is. Having motivated such a feeling, the chapter delivers a warning to those who have chosen not to hear or see: *That is the Day of The Truth; so whoever willed took his Lord to himself as the destination. We warned you of a near punishment on a Day when a man*

will look on what his hands put forward and the ones who are ungrateful will say: O would that I had been earth dust! (78:39-78:40)

Those who raise doubts and question the reality of the Day of Resurrection are here shaken violently: *That is the Day of The Truth; so whoever willed took his Lord to himself as the destination.* (78:39) There is no room left for doubt and controversy. Yet there is time for mending one's erring ways before the fearful watch guard, i.e. hell, becomes a permanent home: *That is the Day of The Truth; so whoever willed took his Lord to himself as the destination.* (78:39) The warning is stern enough to make the drunken awake: (78:40) It will not be long coming, for man's life is but a short period. The scourge is so fearful that the ungrateful, when faced with it, will send up that great cry expressing the wish that they had never lived: *We warned you of a near punishment on a Day when a man will look on what his hands put forward and the ones who are ungrateful will say: O would that I had been earth dust!* (78:40)

This is the cry of one who is in great distress, who feels ashamed for what he has been and what he has done. He feels that it is better not to be, or to be something as worthless as dust, than to witness such a fearful occasion. The terrible position of the ungrateful is the subject of the questions and doubts they raise concerning that fateful tiding.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to write a summary of the signs in this lesson.:

LESSON 81(1). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT BELIEF IN ONE GOD (*TAWHID*)

The greatest emphasis in the Quran is on the Oneness or Unity of God (*tawhid*, monotheism) which implies belief that God is One. He created the universe and all that is in it and that at every moment there is a new creation. *Were We wearied by the first creation? No! They are perplexed about a new creation.* (50:15) He created moral order among us where we are judged according to the merit of our deeds: *Whoever does the weight of an atom of good will see it. Whoever does the weight of an atom of the worst will see it.* (99:7-99:8)

We are not judged arbitrarily: *Know that God will never be One Who Causes to Change a divine blessing when He was gracious to a folk unless they first change what is within themselves. And, truly, God is Hearing, Knowing.* (8:53)

This moral order works without any favor, not only in the case of individuals, but also in the case of societies and peoples: *Mention when Moses said to his folk: O my folk! Remember the divine blessing of God on you when He assigned Prophets among you and assigned kings and gives you what He gave not to anyone of the worlds.* (5:20)

God has entered into covenant with human beings within the limits of this moral order with people as such and not with particular nations or races: *O those who believed! Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God and let not that you hate a folk drive you into not dealing justly. Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness (taqwa). Be God-conscious of God. Truly, God is Aware of what you do.* (5:8)

Reason: First of all, our proof of our belief ultimately depends upon our ability to reason. Without reason, we would not be able to understand the Quranic signs nor respond to their message. The connection between faith and reason is the key to our Quranic critical thinking. It is through this connection that our thoughts and emotions grow into a harmony with each other. The Quran repeatedly asks us to think about the signs of God in the universe and within ourselves, to understand God's presence within us and in the universe, and ultimately to find the truth. The concept of the Quranic signs seeks creates a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those who have intuition recollect.* (38:29)

Good deeds: Proof that we believe in the One God (unity) is through competing with one another in good deeds, (3:114; 23:61) *Do good. Truly God loves the ones who are doers of good.* (2:195) *And among the good deeds is to obey God and to obey the Messenger.* (5:92) Note that 5:92 commands us to obey God and to obey the Messenger. It does not say: obey God and obey Muhammad as a Messenger was sent to many different communities.

QURANIC CHAPTER 79: THE ONES WHO TEAR OUT (AL-NAZIAT)

SIGNS 79:1-79:26

By the ones who tear out vehemently, (79:1)
by the ones who draw out a drawing out, (79:2)
by the ones who are swimmers, swimming, (79:3)
the ones who take the lead, taking the lead (79:4)
by the ones who manage a command, (79:5)
on a Day when the first bang trembles, (79:6)
succeeded by the one that comes behind it. (79:7)
Hearts beating painfully on that Day, (79:8)
their sight, that which is humble. (79:9)
They say: Are we ones who were to be restored
to our original state (79:10)
when we would be crumbled ones? (79:11)
They said: That is a return again of one who is a loser. (79:12)
Truly there will be but one scare. (79:13)
That is when they would be the ones awakening. (79:14)
Has the discourse of Moses approached you? (79:15)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (79:16)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (79:17)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (79:18)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (79:19)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (79:20)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (79:21)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (79:22)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (79:23)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (79:24)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (79:25)
Makkah: Book 27: Moses (79:26)

COMMENTARY°

OVERVIEW

This chapter is just one example of many in this part of the Quran which shares a common objective; namely, to drive home to us the reality of the hereafter, its inevitability and its awesome nature, and to stress its importance to the divine planning of our life in this world. Such planning culminates in our death and subsequent resurrection in a new life. As it sets out to drive this idea home to us, the chapter touches upon our emotions in a variety of ways that are directly relevant to its central theme.

First we have an ambiguous opening which creates an air of fear

and worried expectation. The rhythm here is quick and throbbing; it helps evoke feelings of fear, surprise and wonder:*By the ones who tear out vehemently, by the ones who draw out a drawing out, by the ones who are swimmers, swimming, the ones who take the lead, taking the lead, by the ones who manage a command,* (79:1-79:5)

This equivocal, shaking opening is followed by the first of those scenes which deal with the hereafter. The style and tempo of the opening is here maintained and thus serves as a framework for the overall scene: (79:6-79:14)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

WHAT IS ACTIVE QURANIC LISTENING?

Model active listening to responses by summarizing in your own words the content or gist of their answers.
Expand on the exercise by calling on classmates to do same.
Take time for thought processing in answering.
Create the pause for a thoughtful response rather than expect an immediate reply.
Allow for unexpected turns that suit the purpose and invite gestalt!
Use shock or disruption to shake up a rather boring experience.
Work in small group exercises modeled on questioning.
Merge to incrementally larger groups.
Give report from merged group.
Provide for peer feedback and class discussion.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I realized that I sometimes think with a bias in favor of myself.
I realized I sometimes become irritable over small things.
I realized that I have sometimes said something 'irrational' to get my way.
I realized I have sometimes tried to impose my will upon others.

Lesson 81(2). Critical Thinking Quranic Moral Trait God-consciousness (*taqwa*)

The Quran is revealed to produce this attitude of God-consciousness among people: *an Arabic Recitation without any crookedness so that perhaps they would be God-conscious.* (39:28) It is the presence of this moral attitude which saves people from destruction (27:53; 41:18) and it is this which helps them maintain God's commands in their conjugal life, (2:24; 4:129) in sacrifice, (5:30; 22:37) in different aspects of social life, (2:177) and in fulfilling faithfully their social obligations. (25:63-25:74)

To be God-conscious (*muttaqi*) (to guard against evil) is to exhibit virtuous conduct: *It is not virtuous conduct that you turn your faces towards the East or the West. Rather virtuous conduct consists of: Whoever believes in God and the Last Day, and the angels, and the Book, and the Prophets. Proof of belief in the One God is in one's actions, behavior or practicing of this belief which includes, among other practices: The practice of good deeds: to spend out of one's substance, out of love for God, for kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, for the ransom of prisoners-of-war; to be steadfast in prayers, and to pay the purifying alms* (zakat)*; to fulfill the contracts which have been made; and to be firm and patient in pain (or suffering), adversity, and times of danger. Such people as follow these are possessed of true God-consciousness.* (2:177-2:178)

The better and more lasting reward of the Lord is for those who believe and put their trust in Him; those who avoid the greater crimes and shameful deeds, and, even when they are angry, they forgive; those who hearken to their Lord, and establish regular prayer; who conduct their affairs by mutual consultation; who spend out of what God bestows on them for sustenance; who, when an oppressive wrong is inflicted on them, (are not cowed but) help and defend themselves; and those who recompense injury with injury in degree equal thereto and, better still, forgive and make reconciliation. But indeed if any do help and defend themselves after a wrong is done to them, against such there is no cause of blame. The blame is only against those who oppress people with wrongdoing and insolently transgress beyond bounds through the land, defying right and justice; for such there will be a grievous penalty. But indeed showing patience and forgiveness is an exercise of courageous will and resolution in the conduct of affairs. God-consciousness results in developing a sense of humility.

Quranic Chapter 79: The Ones Who Tear Out (al-Naziat)

Signs 79:27-79:46

Makkah: *Is your constitution harder to create or the heaven which*

He built? (79:27)
He exalted its vault and shaped it (79:28)
and He made its night dark and brought out its forenoon. (79:29)
And, after that, He spread out the earth. (79:30)
He brought out from it its water and its pasture. (79:31)
And the mountains He set firm, (79:32)
an enjoyment for you and for your flocks. (79:33)
When the Greater Catastrophe would draw near, (79:34)
on that Day the human being will recollect
for what he endeavored. (79:35)
Hellfire will be advanced for whoever sees. (79:36)
As for whoever was defiant (79:37)
and held this present life in greater favor, (79:38)
then, truly, hellfire will be the place of shelter! (79:39)
And as for him who feared the Station of his Lord and prohibited
desire from his soul, (79:40)
truly, the Garden will be the place of shelter! (79:41)
*They ask **you** about the Hour. When will it berth?* (79:42)
*Then, what are **you** about that **you** remind of it?* (79:43)
*To **your** Lord is the Utmost Boundary of it.* (79:44)
*And **you** are only one who warns to such a one*
whoever dreads it. (79:45)
It will be as though a Day they see it, they linger not in expectation
but an evening or a forenoon. (79:46)

COMMENTARY°

This chapter is just one example of many in this part of the Quran which shares a common objective; namely, to drive home to us the reality of the hereafter, its inevitability and its awesome nature, and to stress its importance to the divine planning of our life in this world. Such planning culminates in our death and subsequent resurrection in a new life. As it sets out to drive this idea home to us, the chapter touches upon our emotions in a variety of ways that are directly relevant to its central theme.

First we have an ambiguous opening which creates an air of fear and worried expectation. The rhythm here is quick and throbbing; it helps evoke feelings of fear, surprise and wonder:*By the ones who tear out vehemently, by the ones who draw out a drawing out, by the ones who are swimmers, swimming, the ones who take the lead, taking the lead, by the ones who manage a command,* (79:1-79:5)

This equivocal, shaking opening is followed by the first of those scenes which deal with the hereafter. The style and tempo of the

opening is here maintained and thus serves as a framework for the overall scene: *On a Day when the quake quakes, succeeds the one that comes close behind it, hearts beating painfully on that Day, their sight, that which is humble. They say: Will we be restored to our original state when we had been crumbled bones? They said: That is a return again of one who is a loser. Truly, there will be but one scare. That is when they would be the ones awakening.* (79:6-79:14)

Having cast an air of awe, the chapter then provides an account of the end met by some of the ungrateful during the time of Moses and Pharaoh. Here the rhythm is quieter and more relaxed to suit the narrative style: "Have you heard the story of Moses? His Lord called out to him in the sacred valley of Tuwa, saying: (79:15-79:26) This account serves as an introduction to the great principle the chapter aims to establish.

Leaving history aside, the chapter then takes up the open book of the universe. It paints great scenes of the universe which testify to the limitless power and careful planning of God, the Creator of the universe who controls its destiny both in this life and in the life to come. These scenes are drawn in a powerful style and contain a strong rhythm in harmony with the opening of the chapter and its general cadence. (79:27-79:33)

Then comes a statement about the great and overwhelming event, which will be accompanied by the distribution of rewards for actions done in this life. The rewards are portrayed in such a way as to fit in harmoniously with the event itself: (79:34-79:41)

At this point, when we are overwhelmed by the respective fates of the transgressors who prefer this life to the next, and the God-fearing who restrain themselves, the chapter turns to those who deny resurrection, yet ask the Prophet to fix its time. The rhythm here is superb. It further contributes to the awe produced by the account of the Last Hour. *They ask **you** about the Hour. When will it berth? Then, what are **you** about that **you** remind of it? To **your** Lord is the Utmost Boundary of it. And **you** are only one who warns to such a one whoever dreads it. It will be as though a Day they see it, they linger not in expectation but an evening or a forenoon.* (79:42-79:46) Perhaps we should note that these signs end with the sound aha, which adds length to the meter, intensifying the effect of majesty and awe.

We need no more than a glance in order to recognize the perfect coherence and harmony in the building of heaven. (79:28) Knowledge of the laws which govern the existence of the creatures in the sky above us and provide a perfect balance between their actions, movements and mutual effects helps us to understand the full mean-

ing of this sign. It intensifies our feeling of the limitlessness of their very real world, of which human knowledge has uncovered only a tiny part. It overwhelms us with wonder and astonishment. We stand speechless at the infinite beauty of the universe. We can give no explanation for it except that a superhuman power has planned and governs it. This explanation is now accepted even by most of those who profess not to believe in any religion.

The Arabic words used in this sign: *And He made its night dark and brought out its forenoon.* (79:29) add to the strength of the general tone. They also have stronger connotations than the translation suggests. They are used here because they are more fitting with the general context. The succession of darkness and light, at night and in the morning, is a phenomenon recognized by all, but it may be overlooked because we are so familiar with it. Here, the Quran reminds us of its permanent novelty. For it is repeated anew every day, producing the same effects and reactions. The natural laws governing this phenomenon are so precise and miraculous that they continue to impress and astonish us as our knowledge increases.

Spreading out the earth is a reference to the levelling of its surface so that it becomes easy to walk on, and to the formation of a layer of soil suitable for cultivation. *And, after that, He spread out the earth. He brought out from it its water and its pasture. And the mountains He set firm,* (79:30-79:32) Setting the mountains firm is a result of the final shaping of the surface of the earth and its cooling down to a level suitable for the emergence of living organisms. God also brought out water from the earth. This applies to springs that allow deep waters to flow out onto the surface of the earth. It also applies to rain water, since it comes originally from the earth. He also brought forth the pastures, which is, in this context, a reference to all plants upon which we and animals feed, and which directly and indirectly sustain life.

All this happened after heaven was built, the night darkened and the earth spread. Recent astronomical theories support this Quranic statement, for they assume that the earth was moving in its orbit, with day and night succeeding each other for hundreds of millions of years before it was levelled and spread out, becoming suitable for vegetation, and before its surface took its final, present shape of plains, valleys, mountains and oceans.

The Quran declares that all this is for you and your cattle to delight in. *An enjoyment for you and for your flocks.* (79:33) This is a reminder to the human being of what God has made for him, and of His perfect and elaborate planning. It is not by chance that heaven was built in this fashion and the earth spread out to take its present

shape. Our existence, as God's vicegerent, was taken into account. Indeed, human life and progress depend on so many factors which operate in the universe generally, and in the solar system in particular, and even more particularly on the earth itself. All these factors must be made to function in absolute harmony.

Following the Quranic method of delivering a short statement which embodies the basic fact, yet is rich with hints and inferences, the chapter names just a few of these harmonized factors — the building of heaven, the darkening of the night, the bringing forth of daylight, the spreading of the earth, the manipulation of its waters and pastures and the setting firm of mountains — for us and our flocks to delight in. This statement ensures the elaborate planning of the universe is understood by everybody, regardless of education standard. It addresses all humanity, throughout all ages and societies, whether primitive or advanced. The reality of such meticulous and elaborate planning, however, goes far beyond the level mentioned here. The very nature of this universe rules out any possibility of its formation by chance, for no chance construct could result in such perfect and absolute harmony on such an immeasurable scale. The harmony starts with the fact that our solar system is unique among millions and millions of planetary systems, and our earth is also a unique planet with regard to its location in the solar system. It is this uniqueness that makes life on earth possible.

The reality touched upon in this part of the chapter serves as an introduction to the reality of the hereafter, which is the main theme of the whole chapter. *When the Greater Catastrophe would draw near, on that Day the human being will recollect for what he endeavored. Hellfire will be advanced for whoever sees. As for whoever was defiant and held this present life in greater favor, then, truly, hellfire will be the place of shelter! And as for him who feared the Station of his Lord and prohibited desire from his soul, truly, the Garden will be the place of shelter!* (79:34-79:41)

This present life is a period of comfort and enjoyment which are given in precise and accurate measure. Its duration is determined according to the overall planning of the universe and human life. Its comfort and enjoyment will end at the time appointed for their expiry. When the great event takes place, it ravages all and overwhelms all. The fleeting comfort of this life is extinguished. The whole universe, its built heaven, spread out earth and firm mountains are overturned and all living creatures are overwhelmed. *On that Day the human being will recollect for what he endeavored.* (79: 35) He might have been distracted by the events and comforts of this life and he might have overlooked what he has done. But he will recall it all then, when

remembrance brings him nothing but sadness and grief as he realizes what a miserable end he faces. *Hellfire will be advanced for whoever sees.* (79:36) The term 'bringing in sight' is particularly powerful. It is rich in connotations and further strengthens the rhythm. The result is an image so vivid we almost see it in front of us now.

Then, people will have different destinies and the aim of earlier planning in the first life is revealed: *As for whoever was defiant* 79:37 and held this present life in greater favor, then, truly, hellfire will be the place of shelter!* (79:37-79:39) The Arabic term rendered here as 'transgress the bounds of what is right' means literally 'tyrannize', but this term is used here, as elsewhere in the Quran, in a much wider sense than the strict despotism of rulers and dictators. 'Tyranny' is used here as being synonymous with exceeding the limits of right and truth. Therefore, these three signs refer to all those who transgress the boundaries of right, prefer this life to the future life, taking no heed of the latter. Since consciousness of the hereafter defines the values and standards to be applied, he who prefers this present life suffers a breakdown of values and standards resulting in his adoption of faulty standards of behavior. This puts him in the category of despots and transgressors. Thus, hell which is brought in sight of everybody on that great day will be his dwelling place.

The one who fears to stand in front of God does not indulge in sin. If he slips and commits a sin, in a moment of weakness, his fear of God will lead him to repent and pray for forgiveness. *And as for him who feared the Station of his Lord and prohibited desire from his soul, truly, the Garden will be the place of shelter!* (79:40-79:41) Thus, he remains within the area of obedience, the central point of which is the control of one's caprice and desires. Indulgence of desire and caprice is essentially the cause of all forms of tyranny and transgression. It is the spring of evil. The human being hardly ever falls for any reason other than succumbing to caprice and desire. Ignorance is easy to cure. Desire, once ignorance has been cured, is a plague which requires a long and hard struggle to overcome. Yet fear of God is the only solid defense against violent attacks of desire. Indeed, there is hardly any other defense which can withstand such attacks. Therefore, the chapter mentions fear of God and control of desire together in one sign. This fact is here stressed by God, the Creator of the human being and the only One who knows the human soul, its weaknesses and their effective cure.

God does not ask us to suppress our desires, because He knows that it is not possible for us to do so. He simply asks us to control our desires and not to let them control us. He tells us that fear of standing before our Lord, the Almighty, should be of great assistance.

He has fixed our reward for this hard struggle: Paradise as a dwelling place. For God knows perfectly well the hardships involved in this struggle and the high standards to which we are elevated by the same. This struggle, self-control and elevation help us fulfil our humanity. Such fulfilment cannot be achieved by giving way to all desires, and following caprice wherever it leads, on the pretext that desire and caprice are part of human nature. God, who made us sensitive to certain urges, also gave us self-discipline. He also gives us paradise as a reward when we elevate ourselves to a high standard of humanity.

There are two types of freedom. The first is achieved through scoring a victory over one's desires and releasing oneself from the chains of caprice. When a person achieves such a victory he finds himself able to fulfil these desires and caprices in a controlled and balanced way which emphasizes his freedom of choice. This type of freedom is human, one which suits the honor God has bestowed on man. The other type is animal freedom, represented in man's defeat, his enslavement by his desires, and his loss of control over himself. This type of freedom is advocated only by those who have lost their humanity, so they try to cover their slavery with a dress of deceptive freedom.

The last part of the chapter is expressed in a rhythm which evokes awe. *They ask you about the Hour. When will it berth? Then, what are you about that you remind of it? To your Lord is the Utmost Boundary of it. And you are only one who warns to such a one whoever dreads it. It will be as though a Day they see it, they linger not in expectation but an evening or a forenoon.* (79:42- 79:46)

Every time the diehards among the pagan Arabs heard a description of the fearful events of the Day of Judgement, and the reckoning which then takes place, they used to ask the Prophet (peace be upon him) to specify its time: *Then, what are you about that you remind of it?* (79:43) It is an answer which suggests that the Last Hour, or the Day of Judgement, is so great and majestic that the questions put by the ungrateful concerning it sound stupid and pitiful. Moreover, such questions are only put forward by the impudent. The great Prophet himself is asked: Why should you be concerned with its exact timing?

It is so great that neither you nor anyone else should ask to be informed of its exact time. This knowledge belongs to God alone, not to anybody else. *To your Lord is the Utmost Boundary of it.* (79:44) He is the Master of everything which relates to it. The Prophet's own duties, and the limits he should not, and need not exceed are well defined: *And you are only one who warns to such a one whoever dreads it.* (79:45) He is to warn those who will benefit

by such warnings. Such people will then live according to their firm belief that it will arrive at the time appointed by God.

It so grips the soul that our present life with all its epics, events and luxuries will seem to those who lived them shorter than a single day, just one evening or one morning. *It will be as though a Day they see it, they linger not in expectation but an evening or a forenoon.* (79:46) So, the whole world, its centuries and generations will shrink to nothing longer than a morning or an evening in the sight of the very people who quarrel and fight for it, preferring it to their share in the life to come. Yet for such passing enjoyment they abandon the hereafter and forego the certain prospect of dwelling in paradise. This is definitely the greatest stupidity of all, which no person who has ears to hear and eyes to see can ever perpetrate.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC THINKING WORKS

Quranic content is understood by thinking, organized by thinking, analyzed by thinking, synthesized by thinking, evaluated by thinking, transformed by thinking.

You will learn that the Quran teaches you HOW to think through reading it, writing it, speaking it and listening (hearing) to it in any language with which you are familiar. Of course, it is best if this is done with the original Arabic revelation, but not knowing Quranic Arabic should not stop you from learning HOW to think Quranically. It is so powerful, it should come across in any language in which it has been well translated, that is, a translation as close as possible to the original, but making sense (not a literal, word-by-word) or a wordy interpretation for each sign rather than a translation. In reading it, dialogue with it by asking yourself: What is the purpose of this passage? Do I understand what is being said? When I read these signs, I work on the text, take it apart, predict it, test it. It is a very difficult process, very labor intensive. This is close reading. What's worth reading is worth reading well.

Write out a part in your own words in order to better understand it, not, of course, to try to compete with it. Ask yourself if you can reformulate it, elaborate on it and give an example. Speak about it. To communicate well, you need to know your audience and what it is that you want to say. In order for listening (hearing) to be effective, it must be active.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I am able to raise basic issues.
I am probing beneath the surface of things.
I am discovering the structure of my own thought.
I am developing sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
I am arriving at judgments through my own reasoning.
I am learning to listen carefully to what others in my class say.
I am taking what others in my Quranic class say seriously.
I am beginning to look for reasons and evidence.
I am recognizing and reflecting on assumptions.
I am seeking examples, analogies and objections.
I am seeking to be empathetic to the Quranic point of view.
I am looking under the surface of things for the
meaning of the Quranic message.

EPILOGUE

THE SECOND PLEDGE OF AQABA

Thus another year passed away in comparative tranquillity, and the month of pilgrimage in Dhu al-Hijja 1 BH/621 CE , when the Madinah converts were again to rally around the Prophet, drew near.[1] Messages and reports of the amazing success of Islam had no doubt reached the Prophet but he could hardly have been prepared for the enthusiastic numbers ready to crowd to his standard, and swear allegiance to him as Prophet. But the occasion was critical, and it was necessary to proceed with caution.

The Quraysh, if aware of the hostile confederacy—hostile because pledged to support a faction in their community—would have good ground for offense The sword might prematurely be unsheathed, and the cause of Islam endangered. The movement, therefore, was conducted with the utmost secrecy. Even the great body of Madinah pilgrims, in whose company the converts travelled, were unaware of the meeting.

MUSAB REPORTS SUCCESS TO MUHAMMAD

Musab, the teacher sent to Madinah, who accompanied the pilgrim party, immediately on his arrival went to the Prophet and related all that happened in Madinah. The Prophet rejoiced greatly when he heard of the numbers of the converts, and their eagerness in the service of Islam.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR MEETING BY NIGHT AT THE CLOSE OF THE PILGRIMAGE

To elude the scrutiny of the citizens the meeting between the Prophet and his new adherents was to be by night and that the strangers, in case suspicion were aroused, might be as soon as possible beyond reach of their enemies, the time was deferred to the close of the pilgrimage when, the ceremonies and sacrifices being finished, the multitude would on the following morning disperse to their homes. The spot was to be the same secluded glen of Aqaba, outside Mina, where the men of Madinah had met the Prophet before. They were to move there cautiously, after all had retired to rest, waking not the sleeper, nor waiting for the absent.[1]

An hour or two before midnight, the Prophet, attended only by his uncle Abbas, went to the rendezvous, the first of the party. To secure the greater secrecy, the intended meeting, he had told his followers not be present, the less to excite suspicion.

They had not long to wait. Soon the converts from Madinah, singly and by twos and threes, were seen arriving through the moonlight, moving stealthily along the stony valley and barren rocks towards the spot. They were seventy-five in all, sixty-two of the Khazraj, eleven of the Aws with two women, and included the twelve converts who had before met the Prophet there.

When all were seated, Abbas, in a low voice, broke silence by a speech something to this effect: Men of the Khazraj![2] This, my kinsman who dwells amongst us in honor and in safety. His clan will defend him—both those that are converts,and those that still hold to their ancestral faith and defend him to the last. But he prefers to seek protection from you. Wherefore, you Khazrajites, consider the matter well, and count the cost. If you be resolved and are able to defend him, then give the pledge. But if you doubt your ability, at once abandon the design.

Then spoke Al-Bara, an aged chief: We have listened to your words. Our resolution is unshaken. Our lives are at the Prophet's service. It is now for him to speak.

The Prophet began, as he used to by reciting passages from the Quran. He invited all present to the service of God, and dwelt upon the claims and blessings of Islam. Then coming to the business of the night, he ended by saying that he should be content if the strangers pledged themselves to defend him as they would defend their wives and children. At once, from every quarter, arose a confused, tumultuous noise. It was the eager voices of the seventy-five bearing witness to their readiness to take the pledge, and protesting that they would receive and defend the Prophet even at the cost of life and property.

Then Abbas, holding his nephew's hand, called aloud: Hush! There may be spies abroad. Let your leaders of years stand forth, and speak on your behalf. In truth, we are fearful for your safety if our people should discover us. Then when you have plighted your faith depart silently to your camp. So their chief men stood forth.

Then said Al-Bara[3]: Stretch out your hand, O Muhammad! He stretche it out and Bara struck his hand thereon, as the manner was in taking oath c fealty. The Madinites came forward one by one, and did the same. The women repeated only the words of the pledge taken by the twelve in the former year. Muhammad never took women by the hand on such an occasion. They used to step forward and recite the prescribed words, and then he would say: Go, you have pledged yourselves.

Then the Prophet named the twelve of the chief men, and said: Moses chose from amongst his people twelve leaders. Thus shall you be the leaders and sureties for the rest even as the disciples of Jesus were and I am the surety for my people.

They answered: Be it so.[4]

At this moment the voice of one crying aloud, a straggler perchance, searching for his company, was heard at hand. Excited fancy conjured up a Qurayshite if not an infernal spy. The Prophet gave command and the assembly dispersed hurrying back to their several halting places.

And so ended the memorable night of the Second Pledge of Aqaba.[5]

THE UNGRATEFUL QURAYSH CHALLENGE THE MADINAH CHIEFS

So large a gathering could not be held close by Mina without rumors reaching the ungrateful Quraysh enough to rouse suspicion. It was notorious that great numbers at Madinah had begun to embrace the doctrines of Muhammad. The clandestine meeting must have been on his behalf and as such, an unwarrantable interference in the domestic affairs of Makkah. It was virtually a hostile movement.

Accordingly, next morning the chief men of the ungrateful Quraysh repaired to the Madinah encampment, stated their suspicions and complained of unfriendly conduct at the hand of a tribe with whom, of all tribes in Arabia, it would grieve them most to be at war. The converts glanced at each other, and held their peace.[6]

The rest of the pilgrims from Madinah, ignorant of the proceedings, protested that the people of Makkah had been misinformed and that the report was without foundation. Their chief, Abd Allah ibn Ubay, assured the visitors that none of his people would have ventured on such a step without consulting him. The Quraysh were satisfied and took their leave.

THEY PURSUE THE MADINAH CARAVAN

Shortly after, the vast concourse at Mina broke up. The numerous caravans prepared for their journey, and took each its homeward course. The Madinah party had already set out, when the ungrateful Quraysh, having inquired into the midnight assembly,which the Prophet hardly cared to keep secret now, found, to their confusion, that not only had it really taken place, but that far larger numbers than they suspected had pledged themselves to the defense of Muhammad. Foiled and exasperated, they pursued the Madinah caravan in the hope that they might lay hands on some of the delinquents, but, though they scoured the roads leading to Madinah, they fell in with only two.

MALTREATMENT OF ONE OF THE CONVERTS

Of these one escaped. The other, Saad ibn Ubayda, they seized and, tying his hands behind his back, dragged him by his long hair back to Makkah. There he would, no doubt, have suffered further maltreatment, had he had not been able to claim protection from certain Qurayshite chiefs to whom at Madinah he had given service. He was released and rejoined the caravan just as his friends were about to return in search of him.

THE UNGRATEFUL QURAYSH, ENRAGED, RECOMMENCE PERSECUTION

It soon became evident that, in consequence of the Second Pledge of Aqaba that the Prophet and his followers contemplated an early flight. The prospect of such a movement, which would remove their opponents entirely out of reach and plant them in an asylum where they might securely work out their lives at first kindled the wrath of the idolater-Quraysh. They renewed

their persecution and, wherever they had the power, sought either to force the confessors to recant, or by confinement prevent their escape.

The two things would react on one another. The persecution hastening the departure of the converts, and each fresh departure irritating the Quraysh to greater cruelty. Tabari says: There were two occasions on which persecution raged the hottest. First, the period preceding the emigration to Abyssinia and second, that following the Second Pledge of Aqaba.

Such severities, or the dread of them—for the Muslims were conscious that they had now seriously compromised their loyalty as citizens of Makkah—hastened the crisis. Indeed, when the Prophet had once resolved upon a general migration, there was no advantage from a protracted residence among his enemies. It was therefore but a few days after the Second Pledge of Aqaba that the Prophet gave command to his followers, saying: Depart unto Yathrib (Madinah) for the Lord has verily given unto you brothers in that city, and a home in which you may find refuge.

THE DEPARTURE OF CONVERTS

So they made preparation, chose companions for the journey, and set out in parties secretly. Such as had the means rode two and two upon camels. The rest walked on foot.

Persecution and artifice caused a few to fall away from the faith. Umar had arranged a rendezvous with Aiyash, son of Abu Rahya, and a friend, at a spot near Makkah where they were to set out for Madinah. The friend was held back by his family, and relapsed for a time into idolatry.

Thus Umar and Aiyash started alone and journeyed to Quba, a suburb of Madinah, where they alighted and were hospitably received at the house of Rifaa. But his half-brothers, Abu Jahl and Harith—they were all three sons o' Asma of Tamim—followed Aiyash to Madinah, and told him that his mothe. had vowed she would retire beneath no shade, nor suffer a comb or any oil to touch her hair, until she saw his face again.

Umar cautioned him saying: By the Lord! They only desire to tempt you from your faith. Your mother will soon relax her vow. Beware, Aiyash! return not now to Makkah.

But he replied: Nay, I will not recant. But I have property at Makkah. I will go and fetch it. It will strengthen me. I will also release my mother from her vow.

Seeing that he was not to be diverted from his purpose, Umar gave him a swift camel and bade him, if he suspected treachery, to save himself thereon.

So when the party alighted at a certain place, his companions seized him suddenly, and bound him with cords. As they carried him into Makkah in broad daylight, they exclaimed: Even thus, you men of Makkah should treat your foolish ones! Then they kept him under surveillance.[7]

APPENDIX 1: CORRELATION BETWEEN THE PRESENT ORDER OF CHAPTERS IN THE QURAN AND THEIR CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

1 = 96
2 = 68
3 = 73
4 = 74
5 = 1
6 = 111
7 = 81
8 = 87
9 = 92
10 = 89
11 = 93
12 = 94
13 = 103
14 = 100
15 = 108
16 = 102
17 = 107
18 = 109
19 = 105
20 = 113
21 = 114
22 = 112
23 = 53
24 = 80
25 = 97
26 = 91
27 = 85
28 =95
29 = 106
30 = 101
31 = 75
32 = 104
33 = 77
34 = 50
35 = 90
36 = 86
37 = 54
38 = 38
39 = 7
40 = 72
41 = 36
42 = 25
43 = 35
44 = 19
45 = 20
46 = 56
47 = 26
48 = 27
49 = 28
50 = 17
51 = 10
52 = 11
53 = 12
54 = 15
55 = 6
56 = 37
57 = 31
57 = 34
59 = 39
60 = 40
61 = 41
62 = 42
63 = 43
64 = 44
65 = 45
66 = 46
67 = 51
68 = 88
69 = 18
70 = 16
71 = 71
72 = 14
73 = 21
74 = 23
75 = 32
76 = 52
77 = 67
78 = 69
79 = 70
80 = 78
81 = 79
82 = 82
83 = 84
84 = 30
85 = 29
86 = 83
87 = 2
88 = 8
89 = 3
90 = 33
91 = 60
92 = 4
93 = 99
94 = 57
95 = 47
96 = 13
97 = 55
98 = 76
99 = 65
100 = 78
101 = 59
102 = 24
103 = 22
104 = 63
105 = 58
106 = 49
107 = 66
108 = 64
109 = 61
110 = 62
111 = 48
112 = 5
113 = 9
114 = 110

NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION TO QURANIC THINKING BY HASHIM KAMALI

1. The rough equation that earlier Muslim scholars drew between the Islamic and Western conceptions of reason tended to be oblivious of the categories of reason and the Western critique of reason that divided it into "instrumental reason, critical reason, functional reason, abstract reason, imperialist reason, decentering reason" and the like. For details see Abdelwahab M. Elmessiri, "Features of the New Islamic Discourse," a Cairo conference paper, 1997: http:// www.21stcenturytrust.org/messiri.doc.

2. Some commentators have distinguished a total of 30 expressions that revolve around thinking over the *ayat*. See Abu Bakr al-Razi, *Tafsir al-Kabir* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1985), II, 222f.

3. Cf Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-'Ilm fi'l-Quran al-Karim* (Cairo: Maktaba Wahba, 1416/1996), 36.

4. Al-Isfahani, *Mufradat Alfaz al-Qur'an*, under "*Fikr*".

5. Cf., Karim Douglas Crow, "Islam and Reason" in *Al-Shajarah*, vol. 8, (2003),120-1.

6. Abbas Mahmud, "al-Agqad, Al-Tafkir Faridah Islamiyyah" (Thinking is an Islamic Obligation) quoted in Jamal Badi and Mustapha Tajdin, *Creative Thinking: An Islamic Perspective*, 2nd edn. (Kuala Lumpur: International Islamic University Malaysia, 2005), 6.

7. Cf. al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-'Ilm*, 41-45 quoting ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's *Miftah Dar al-Sa'ada*, and 'Agqad's book entitled *al-Tafkir Faridah Islamiyya* (Beirut: al-Matba'a al-'Asriyya, 1992).

8. Cf. al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-Ilm*, 200.

9. Cf .Ibid., 202.

10. Al-Raghib al-Isfahani, *Mufradat Alfaz al-Quran* (Beirut: Dar al-Shamiyya 1383/1964), 249.

11. Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i, *al-Mizan fi-Tafsir al-Quran* (Beirut. al-Mu'assasa al-'Alami, 1383/1964) II, 395.

12. Ala uddin al-Mattagi al-Hindi, *Kanz al-Ummah fi Sunan al-Aqwal wa'l-Af'al* (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risalah, 1383/1981), hadith no. 5873.

13. Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali, *Risalat al-Radd 'ala al-Laduniyya*, ed. 'Abd Allah Riyad Mustafa, (Damascus: Dar al-Hikma, 1986), 241.

14. CE Ahmad Fu'ad al-Ahwani, *al-Tarbiyah fi'l-Islam* (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif bi-Misr, 1968), 227-228.

15. Cf. Aziz al-Azmeh, *Arabic Thought and Islamic Societies* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 109.

16. Cf. Diane F. Halpern, *Thought and Knowledge: An Introduction to Critical Thinking* (Mahwah: New Jersey, Lawrence Erlbaum and Associates, 1996), 21.

17. Cf. Ibrahim B. Syed, "Critical Thinking" as online at http://www.lrfi. org/articles/articles_101_150/critical_thinking.htm.

(18. Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Lahore: Shah Muhammad Ashraf, reprint 1982), 127.

19. Malik Bin Nabi, *Intaj al-Mustashriqin* (Cairo: Maktabah 'Amir, 1990), 34.

20. Iqbal, op. cit., 139.

21. See for details Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, *What's Right with Islam is What's*

Right with America (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2004), 4-5.

22. Georg W. H. Hegel, *Philosophy of History* (New York: Dove Books, 1956), 109.

23. Louay Safi, "The Creative Mission of the Muslim Minorities in the West: Synthesizing the Ethos of Islam and modernity," a conference paper presented at Westminster University, London, England February 21, 2004: http://insight.org/articles/Current/MuslimMinorities.htm.

24. Cf., M.H. Kamali, "Islam, Rationality and Science," in Islam and Science, vol. 1, no. 2 (2003), 126f, see also Mehdi Golshani, "Philosophy of Science from the Qur'anic Perspective," in *Towards Islamisation of Disciplines* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1989), 73f.

25. Cf. Ishfaq Ahmad, "Research and Development Culture in the Islamic World: Past and Present Problems and Future Directions," in Abu Bakr Abdul Majeed et al. (eds.) *New Knowledge, Research and Development in the Muslim World* (Kuala Lumpur: Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia, 2004), 14-15.

26. See for a discussion Oliver Leaman, "Institutionalising Research and Development Culture in the Islamic and Non-Islamic World: A Comparative Perspective," in Abu Bakr Majeed, (ed.) *New Knowledge*, 50-51.

27. Malik bin Nabi, *Intaj al-Mustashriqin*, 26.

28. See for details Mohammad Hashim Kamali, "Issues in the Understanding of Jihad and Ijtihad" in *Islamic Studies* 41 (2002), 623 ff.

29. There is a chapter on *ijtihad* in M. H. Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1991, 3rd edn. 2003). See also my article "Issues in the Understanding of Jihad and Ijtihad" in *Islamic Studies*, 41 (2002), 617-635; and "Issues in the Legal Theory and Usul and Prospects for Reform" in *Islamic Studies*, 40 (2001), 1-21.

30. Sergio Moravia. *The Enigma of the Mind: The Mind-Body Problem in Contemporary Thought*, tr. S. Staton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. First published in Rome, 1986), 4-5.

31. See for example, Howard Gardner, *Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligence for the 21st Century* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

32. See for details Roger Garudy, "The Balance Sheet of Western Philosophy in this Century" in *Towards Islamisation of Disciplines* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1989), 399f.

33. Mehdi Golshani, "From Knowledge to Wisdom: A Qur'anic Perspective," in *Islamic Studies*, 44 (2005), 13.

34. Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Fiqh al-Awlawiyyat*, 68.

35. Cf., Al-Ahwani, *al-Tarbiyah fi'l-Islam*, 189.

36. Mohammad Hashim Kamali is Professor of Islamic Law and jurisprudence at the International Islamic University Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur. "Reading the Signs," Center for Islam and Science. Gale Group, 2006.

NOTES TO THE TEXT, INTERLUDE AND EPILOGUE

TEXT

1. Ali Shariati, *Shariati on Shariati.*
2. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Science and Civilization in Islam.*
3. Ibid.

INTERLUDE

1. Ziyad ibn Abdullah al-Bakkai from Muhammad ibn Ishaq; the following account reached Ibn Ishaq from Abd Allah ibn Masud and Abu Said al-Khudri, and Ayisha, the Prophet's wife, and Muawiya ibn Abu Sufyan, and al-Hasan ibn Abul Hasan al-Basri, and Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri and Qatada and other traditionists, and Umm Hani bint Abu Talib.

EPILOGUE

1. Ibn Hisham, p 293; Tabari, i. 1217; Ibn Saad p 148) s

2. The people of Madinah, both of the Aws and Khazraj tribes, used to be addressed collectively as Al-Khazraj.

3 Al-Bara, who bore here so conspicuous a part, died the following month. He was the first over whose grave Muhammad prayed in the formula usual afterwards: O Lord! Pardon Him! Be merciful unto him! Be reconciled unto him! and verily You are reconciled.

4. *Nasib*, Leader, is the term which ever after honorably marked the Twelve. Four were of the number who had met Muhammad here before. Three were of the Aws tribe. The rest, Khazrajites. Several are mentioned as able to write Arabic, and as perfect expert in writing, archery, and swimming.

5. Ibn Hisham, pp 196-200.

6. A story is told by Kab, one of the seventy-five, that at this moment to divert a tention, he pointed to a new pair of shoes which a Qurayshite chief had on, and said to one of his friends: Why could not you, our chief, wear a pair of new shoes like this Qurayshite chief? The latter, taking off the shoes, threw them at Kab, saying: Put them on yourself. His friend said: Hush! give back the shoes. Kab refused. The chief then tried to snatch them from him. A commotion ensued, which was just what Kab desired, as it served to cover the awkward situation of the Madinah converts.

7. Ibn Hisham, p. 319 Aiyash under such treatment relapsed into idolatry. Umar says according to 39:53, apostates could be saved. He sent a copy of it to Aiyash in-Makkah. Aiyash on this took courage, and forthwith mounted his camel for Madinah. Ibn Hisham, p. 320.

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Quranic Chapter 29: The Spider (al-Ankabut)
Signs 29:12-29:13 •
Commentary •
Lesson 85(2). Critical Thinking Intellectual Standard Worthiness (focussing on the important, not the trivial) •
Signs 29:14-29:22 •
Commentary •
Lesson 85(3). Critical Thinking Intellectual Standard Numerous or Multiple Viewpoints •
Signs 29:23-29:30 •
Commentary •
Lesson 85(4). Critical Thinking Intellectual Standard Right Judgment •
Signs 29:31-29:44 •
Commentary •
Lesson 85(5). Critical Thinking Intellectual Standard Clarity (understandable, to be clear) •
Signs 29:45-29:51 •
Commentary •
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PREFACE

THE CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STUDIES TEXTBOOK SERIES

There are thirty books in this series. Books entitled *Book Year 1* to *Book Year 24* consist of one book for each year of the revelation. The chapters' or sections' signs (*ayat*) are presented according to the 558 *ruku* or sections of the 114 chapters of the Quran. They each include the relevant chapter (*surah*) or chapters (when they are short) or sections, *ruku* (when there are multiple sections in a particular chapter) in chronological order. The chapters are numbered according to the chronological order of the Quranic chapters provided by al-Azhar University as the officially accepted order of revelation. Each section (*ruku*) is followed by a commentary by one of the well-known commentators.

Book Year 13, the present volume, covers events from Muharram 1-Dhu al-Hijja 30, 1 BH/ca. July 27, 621 CE-July 15, 622 CE.

Books 25-28 are devoted to the Quranic stories of all other Prophets and Messengers in order of their dates. *Book 25: Adam, Cain and Abel, Enoch (Idris), Noah, Hud and the People of Aad; Saleh and the People of Thamud; Book 26: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Jacob (Israel), Joseph and Job; Book 27: Moses, Aaron, Children of Jacob (Israel), Jethro (Shuayb), Joshua, Khidr and Samuel; Book 28: David, Solomon, Elijah (Ilyas), Elisha (Alyasa), Jonah (Younis), Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl), Ezra (Uzayr), Dhul Qarnayn (Cyrus the Great or Alexander the Great), Luqman, Zechariah, John the Baptist (Yahya), Mary and Jesus.* The last two are: *Book 29: The Life of Prophet Muhammad from Birth to the Revelation* and *Book 30: Teacher's Manual.* The last, *Book 30,* has been prepared for the teacher's Lesson Plans.

At the beginning of each lesson, there is an exercise in critical thinking skills. These consist of one of the following: **The Nine Intellectual Standards, The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** and **The Seven Moral Traits**. The Eight Elements contain thirty-five strategies. However there is no specific order as to how they should be learned and incorporated into our thinking process.

Once we understand the critical thinking skills and then apply them to the signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. Once the skills as presented in the Quranic message are put into practice with the grace of God, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behavior.

Each lesson is followed by questions for classroom discussion or for dialogue. At the end of each lesson there is an assessment/assignment for students to use while they are developing critical thinking skills as they hopefully learn HOW the Quran teaches critical thinking.

SOURCES

The sources for the history include the works of Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hashim, Waqidi, Ibn Sad and commentaries by Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn, Tustari and Sayyid Qutb. The sources for the commentaries of Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn and Tustari have been used with the permission of the publisher, the Royal Institute of Ahl al-Bayt in Jordan. They are available on their website www.altafsir.com.

The inclusion of excerpted commentaries (tafsir) by Sayyid Qutb's In the Shade of the Quran (available online) in this Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series is because Sayyid Qutb is considered by some extremist groups as their intellectual source. By including excerpts from his eighteen volume Quranic commentary, extremists cannot disclaim the importance of learning critical thinking as this series is to help young adults learn HOW to think using self-realization (tahqiq) and critical thinking (furqan) skills taught by the Quran. This in order to arm young adults with the ability to choose reason over any irrational extremist ideology that is presented to them.

TERMINOLOGY

All Quranic signs are translations from The Sublime Quran. For the Muslim, the Quran is the Word (Logos) of God. It is this Word of God that has inspired artists, artisans, poets, philosophers and writers, those who had been the exponents of Islamic culture and civilization for almost 1500 years. Yesterday and today's Muslim wants to know more about each Word that God chose for His revelation through the Quran. This realization, in turn, prompted the translation of The Sublime Quran, an attempt to give the sense of unity within the revelation to a non-Arabic speaking reader.

There are several points to note about the terminology used in the translation of the Quranic text and the commentaries.

1. The blessed Prophet did not bring a new religion; he came to confirm what was right in the messages of the previous Prophets. Does this translation speak to the universality of the Quran? The Quran tells the Prophet, the mercy to all of humanity, to speak to people in their own language. Following his example, in addition to the translation being unbounded by time, in several sensitive cases, the word chosen to translate an Arabic word is also of a universal or inclusive rather than a particular or exclusive nature. This adds to the broadening of the perspective and scope of the Quran so that it becomes inclusive rather than exclusive to one particular group of people. In other words, in this way a larger audience can relate to its message.

2. The actual word "Islam" comes from the verb, "to submit" (*aslama*), submission (*sallama*), and ones who submit (*muslimun*). The Quran refers to itself (the Quran) from the very beginning of the revelation (68:35).

3. As previously indicated, the four books (Book 25, Book 26, Book 27 and Book 28) are the stories of the other Prophets and Messengers mentioned in the Quran. While these stories do have lessons to be learned by the Prophet

and those who heard the revelations as well as for us today, they do not refer directly to Prophet Muhammad and his prophethood following the beginning of the revelation. What remains in these books of the Quranic signs in the 24 years of the chronological Quran relate directly to him, what he did and what he was told to say. This allows us to understand his life directly from the Quranic message, the Quranic Sunnah, without any interruption of the stories about previous Prophets and Messengers.

4. Most English translations of the Quran refer to the "Children of Israel." The word "Israel" when used in the Quran refers to Jacob, the patriarch of the children who followed him such as Joseph. Therefore, it should be the "Children of Jacob" as it appears in these texts.

5. The words "*kufr*" and "*kafir*" have been translated here as "ingratitude" and "ungrateful" where the context allows. This is the first meaning of the word and many of us in our lifetime have met Muslims who are "ungrateful." It is the ungrateful Muslims who practice intolerance by declaring anyone who says: Peace be upon you (*as-salam alaykum*) as a non-believer (with what is called *takfir*). In those cases, it would not be suitable to call them "unbelievers" or "infidels," but it is clearly appropriate to refer to them as being "ungrateful" and this would include the early Quraysh, ungrateful for God's revelation and prophethood of Muhammad, who ridiculed the Prophet and fought against the Quranic message of love, forgiveness and peace.

6. Yet another example of the use of inclusive language in an attempt to speak to people in their own language, is the use of God instead of Allah. Many English speaking Muslims, as well as many of the English translations of the Quran to date, use Allah when speaking English instead of God. The intention on the part of the speaker is to maintain a sense of piety. They feel that using Allah in English moves them in that direction. Many even claim that the word Allah cannot be translated.

However well-intentioned a person may be, when speaking English, the use of the word Allah instead of God, first of all, does not follow the Quranic verse that tells the Prophet to speak to people in their own language. Subsequently, it does not follow the Sunnah of the Prophet who did speak to people in their own language.

In addition, it creates a divide between Muslims who use the word and the English speaking people of various faiths to whom they are speaking. In effect, it creates the illusion that there is more than One God—Allah and God. The response of the English speaking person of another faith is to say: I do not understand your religion; you have a different God than I do and you call Him Allah.

It needs to be clearly explained to English speaking Muslims that, unlike what they may feel, they do not have a monopoly on the word Allah. Arabic speaking Christians and Arabic speaking Jews also refer to God as Allah. The Old Testament and New Testament, when translated into Arabic, use Allah for God.

English speaking Muslims, therefore, need to recall the message of the Quran that God is One (tawhid). In addition, the Prophet did not bring a new religion but confirmed what was correct in the messages of previous Prophets, namely, that God is One. Finally, they need to follow the example of the Prophet, as the Quran says he is the model or example to be followed, by speaking to people in their own language.

7. The Arabic language, much like old English, has the second person singular (masculine: anta (where the verb ends in *ka*). The English equivalent is the subject: "thou" or the object: "thee" or the possessive: "thy." As these are no longer in common usage in English, wherever the original Arabic uses one of these terms, the word "**you**" or "**your**" appear in bold font so that the reader knows the original was the second person singular. When the Quran is speaking directly to the Prophet, it uses the pronoun "thee" or "thou" so it is an important distinction to make.

Using you (second person plural) is done to help English speaking readers, recognizing that using the second person plural pronoun you (masculine: *antum* where the verb ends in masculine: *kum*) for God is to intimate that God is plural, the only sin in the Quran that is unforgivable. By putting the pronoun **you** in bold font indicates the true intention.

8. For the Arabic word "ayah," the English word used in these texts is "sign" rather than the Biblical term, "verse."

9. Several of the signs were abrogated over time. However the indication of a sign being abrogated was done after the complete revelation of the Quran. Whether or not a sign was later abrogated does not change the fact that the first Muslims who listened to the Quran, heard the signs that may have later been said to have been abrogated and that a hafez of the Quran recites all the signs as they appear in the original Arabic revealed to the Prophet. Whatever signs scholars later determined to be abrogated are still part of the Quran and, therefore, are not relevant to learning to be a Quranic critical thinker, learning HOW to think.

10. The first number that appears when the Quranic Chapters begin refers to the chapter number in the chronological order of the revelation so that Quranic Chapter 110 which was the last to be revealed is number 114 in the chronological order.

11. It is to be noted that whenever the name of Muhammad, Prophet Muhammad or the Prophet are used, one may say a silent prayer of blessings for him.

CRITICAL THINKING• COMPONENT

Quranic critical thinking (furqan, discernment) is a process that analyzes how we think. It is a 3-step process: **I**: Quranic critical thinkers apply the **Nine Intellectual Standards** (logic, being definitive, connected, appropriate, have worthiness, include numerous viewpoints, have right judgment, clarity, being fair and just) to: **II**: **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** (point of view, purpose, questions, information, inferences, concepts, assumptions, im-

plications): in order to develop: **III: The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** (belief in One God (tawhid), God-consciousness (taqwa), virtuous conduct (birr) or integrity through moral discipline, empowering constancy ('azm) and courage, persevering in goodness (sabara), love (hubb) or empathic altruism (ihsan) and being fair and just (rashad). The signs (ayat) in each section (ruku) teach any or every one of the **Nine Intellectual Standards** or any and every one of the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or any or every one of the **Seven Quranic Moral Traits.**

This is the key to critical thinking. We do not learn "what" to think, but, rather, "how" to think. Using the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** as an example, critical thinking can be summarized in the following sentence: Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** and consequences. We use **concepts,** ideas and theories to **interpret information** (data, facts and experiences) in order to **answer questions,** solve problems, and resolve issues.

The point of view in all cases is that of the Quranic message and the various individuals and groups that it addresses as this series is a course in Quranic Studies as well as a course in the chronological history of the life of the blessed Prophet (sira). Each student is encouraged to come up with his or her own questions and responses to those questions in order to learn how to become the Quranic critical thinker as the Quranic teaches us HOW to think.

It is important to note that there is no correct or incorrect answer. The important point is to go through the process with as many of the sections as one is able to do. Little by little, this will help each student or reader to develop into critical thinkers or "discerners" of the Quranic message creating a bond between them and the Quranic message.

Once we learn to analyze signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. It is important to note that the order of **The Nine Intellectual Standards** or **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or **The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** is not important. With the grace of God, once all are present, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behaviors.

THE NINE INTELLECTUAL STANDARDS

1. LOGIC (REASONABLE: 'AQALA, 'AQL)
2. DEFINITIVENESS (TO BE PRECISE: MUHKAMA)
3. CONNECTEDNESS (CONTAINING COMPLEXITIES AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS: (MUQTARIN)
4. APPROPRIATENESS (TO MAKE RELEVANT: SADID)
5. WORTHINESS (FOCUSING ON THE IMPORTANT, NOT TRIVIAL,

TO BE SIGNIFICANT: AHL)
6. NUMEROUS OR MULTIPLE VIEWPOINTS: 'DHARA'A)
7. RIGHT JUDGMENT (RUSHD)
8. CLARITY (UNDERSTANDABLE, TO BE CLEAR: TABAYYANA)
9. BEING FAIR AND JUST ('AQL, RIGHT-MINDED (RASHAD))

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES

1. EMBODYING A POINT OF VIEW, FRAME OF REFERENCE, PERSPECTIVE (RECOLLECT, BEAR IN MIND, TAKE FOR GRANTED: TADHAKKUR)
   - THINKING INDEPENDENTLY
   - DEVELOPING INSIGHT INTO EGO-CENTRICITY OR SOCIO-CENTRICITY
   - EXPLORING THOUGHTS UNDERLYING FEELINGS AND FEELINGS UNDERLYING THOUGHTS
   - DEVELOPING INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY
2. GENERATING A PURPOSE, AIM, GOAL, OBJECTIVE: (CONSIDER: RA'A)
   - CLARIFYING ISSUES OR CONCLUSIONS
   - CLARIFYING AND ANALYZING THE MEANINGS OF WORDS OR PHRASES
   - READING CRITICALLY: CLARIFYING OR DISCERNING THE SACRED TEXT
   - LISTENING CRITICALLY: THE ART OF SILENT DIALOGUE
3. RAISING QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, ISSUES: (REFLECT: TAFAKKARA)
   - PRACTICING DISCUSSION: CLARIFYING AND QUESTIONING INTERPRETATIONS
   - REASONING DIALOGICALLY: COMPARING INTERPRETATIONS
   - REASONING DIALECTICALLY: EVALUATING INTERPRETATIONS KNOWLEDGE, WISDOM
   - DEEP QUESTIONING
4. USING INFORMATION, DATA, FACTS, OBSERVATIONS, EXPERIENCES, REASONED JUDGMENTS (EVIDENCE: BASIRAH)
   - DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION: CLARIFYING VALUES AND STANDARDS
   - ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ACTIONS
   - DISTINGUISHING RELEVANT FROM IRRELEVANT INFORMATION
   - GIVING REASONS AND EVALUATING EVIDENCE
5. MAKING INTERPRETATIONS, INFERENCES, CONCLUSION, SOLUTIONS (UNDERSTANDING: TABASSUR)
   - ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ARGUMENTS AND INTERPRETATIONS
   - MAKING PLAUSIBLE INFERENCES OR INTERPRETATIONS
   - RECOGNIZING CONTRADICTIONS
   - NOTING SIGNIFICANT SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES
6. UTILIZING CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS, PRINCIPLES, MODELS AND VOCABULARY (RECALL: IDHDHAKARA)
   - COMPARING ANALOGOUS SITUATIONS: REFRAMING INSIGHTS TO NEW CONTEXTS

DEVELOPING ONE'S PERSPECTIVE: CREATING OR EXPLORING ARGUMENTS
MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS
COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE
THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING
7. MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PREPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED (OPINIONS: ZUNUN)
8. GENERATING IMPLICATIONS, CONSEQUENCES (PONDER, EVALUATE: TADABBUR)
GENERATING OR ASSESSING SOLUTIONS
EXPLORING IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES IN DETAIL

1. Embodying a **Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective** (Recollect, Bear in Mind, Take to Heart (*tadhakkur*)):Whenever we think, we think within a point of view. What is the Quranic point of view in these signs? Does the Quran follow universal intellectual values of clarity, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, logic, fairness?

2. Generating a **Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective** (Consider (*ra'a*)): My purpose in addressing the Quranic purpose in these signs is . . .? Know exactly what you are after. Make sure you are not operating with a hidden agenda and that your announced and real purposes are the same. Whenever we think, we think for a purpose. What is the Quran's fundamental purpose in revealing these signs? Are there multiple points of view?

3. Raising **Questions, Problems, Issues** (Reflect (*tafakkara*)): What is the key question I am trying to answer. State the question as clearly and precisely as you can. Details are very important.

4. Using **Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments** (Evidence (*basirah*)): Actively seek the information most relevant to the question. Include in that information options for action, both short-term and long-term. We use experiences, facts and data that the Quran gives us. What information does the Quran give in these signs? What information do I need to answer my question?

5. Making **Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusions, Solutions** (Understanding (*tabassur*)): After reasoning (discerning) the above points, decide what the best answer (conclusion) to the question is. What inferences, judgments or conclusions do these signs make? What are my most fundamental inferences or conclusions based on these Quranic signs?

6. Utilizing **Concepts, Theories, Definitions, Axioms, Laws, Prin-**

ciples, Models, Vocabulary (Recall (*idhdhakara*)): The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are ... ? Figure out all significant ideas needed to understand and answer your question. You may need to analyze these concepts. Use a good dictionary. Inferences or conclusions are based on Quranic concepts and theories. What is the most basic concept in my question? What Quranic terms have I learned?

7. Making **Assumptions, Presuppositions, Taking for Granted** (Opinions (*zunun*)): Some important assumptions I am using in my thinking are ... ? Figure out what you are taking for granted. Watch out for self-serving or unjustified assumptions. The Quranic point of view is based on some assumptions. What assumptions is the Quran using in its reasoning? What assumptions am I using in my reasoning from the Quranic revelation?

8. Generating **Implications, Consequences** (Ponder (*tadabbur*)): Evaluate options. Take into account the advantages and disadvantages of possible decisions before acting? What consequences are likely to follow from this or that decision? The Quranic assumptions and my assumptions lead to implications and consequences. What are the implications of the Quranic reasoning? What are the implications of my reasoning? Am I correct in understanding the Quranic implications?

THE SEVEN QURANIC MORAL TRAITS

1. BELIEF IN ONE GOD (TAWHID)
2. GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (TAQWA)
3. VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE (MORALLY OBLIGATED: QANATA, GOODNESS, BIRR)
4. EMPOWERING CONSTANCY, COURAGE (AZM)
5. PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS (STEADFAST: SABARA)
6. EMPATHIC ALTRUISM (LOVE, MERCY, COMPASSION: HUBB)
7. FAIRNESS (NOT SELF-SERVING OR EGO-CENTRIC: 'AQSATA)

*****

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

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I am grateful to the work of M. M. Sharif, "Philosophical Teachings of the Quran," and B. A. Dar, "Ethical Teachings of the Quran," (indicated by * in the text) in A History of Muslim Philosophy and to my dearest friend, Khalida Rahman who has been supportive of my work for over twenty-five years.

My gratitude also goes to the Center for Critical Thinking and, particularly, the online work done in youtube videos and other works by the educator-founders-members of the Critical Thinking Community, namely, the late Dr. Richard Paul and his wife and constant collaborator, Dr. Linda Elder. All indications of • throughout the text refers to quotes or paraphrases from their excellent work as part of the Critical Thinking Community, www.criticalthinking.org. My attempt has been for all the quotes and paraphrases used here to follow fair copyright use.

Whereas Drs. Paul and Elder may not have used their work in religious educational settings, due to the separation of church and state in the educating of American students, learning from their works it became clear that their teachings can help Muslim students, as well, if their method is presented through the content of the Quran. If Muslim students come to understand that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking, that is, discernment (furqan), HOW to think, they will be armed with the intellectual skills they need to confront Islamic extremism.

One of the main scholars that Islamic extremists use in their propaganda is Seyyed Qutb. In order to further arm Muslim students for any confrontation they may have with Islamic extremists who would quote that their ideas come from Seyyed Qutb, I have used his Quranic commentary, In the Shade of the Quran, in Chapter I of this work. Students will learn how, contrary to what they may be told or taught, in many cases, Seyyed Qutb's commentary (indicated by °) speaks of and describes the way that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking and Islamic extremists cannot say that I have left out their scholars.

Last, but certainly not least, I wish to thank Kazi Publications and its founder, Liaquat Ali, for his constant support and encouragement to forge new areas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqli*) will be passed to young students as they learn of a Muslim world deeply entrenched in Islamic narrative sciences (*al-naqli*).

INTRODUCTION

READING THE SIGNS: A QURANIC PERSPECTIVE ON THINKING

BY MOHAMMAD HASHIM KAMALI

The Islamic notion of *aql* (intellect) embraces the faith dimension of knowledge that is also informed by ethical values. The prevailing reading of the Quran on rationality consists of a coalition of faith and reason which is also cognizant of the metaphysical aspect of reality and the limits, therefore, of human reason. This may be said to be a dividing line between the Islamic and Western conceptions of rationality, especially in its post-Enlightenment context.

Thus, it is not accurate to draw a direct parallel between them, as was the case in the Islamic discourse of the colonial period wherein many Muslim writers greatly admired the Western conception of rationality. The twentieth century Islamic discourse has shown awareness of that difference as it began to comprehend the subtleties inherent in the Western lexicon on rationality and its cultural overtones.[1]

THE DIVINE SIGNS (*AYAT*)

The Quran teaches an essential doctrine of the *ayat* (God's signs in the universe) functioning as pointers to the providential purpose at all levels of creation. Thus the Quran makes frequent references such as 'signs for a people who understand—exercise their intellect'. This evidential role of the divine signs entails an accompanying demand placed upon humans to engage in a rational understanding of the signs and draw conclusions on the discovery of truth and correct guidance.

The human reception of the signs, thus, depends ultimately upon the integrity of reason, without which humans would be incapable neither of comprehending the signs nor of responding to their message. The more abundant is an individual's native endowment of reason, the greater is the possibility for him or her to attain a larger magnitude of understanding and a higher level of response.

The nexus between faith and reason thus constitutes the hallmark of intelligent Islamic spirituality, wherein human intellect and emotions are guided toward harmony with one another. The Quran repeatedly provokes its reciters to think about the signs of God in the universe and within themselves, to understand God's illustrious presence in them, and ultimately to vindicate the truth. The word *ayah* and its plural *ayat* occur in the Quran over 400 times, although the whole of the Quran introduces itself as a collection of *ayat*. To quote the Quran: *We will cause them to see Our signs on the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is The Truth.* (41:53) And, *On the earth are signs, for the ones that are certain and in yourselves.*

Will you not, then, perceive? (51:20-51:21)

God reveals the truth in a variety of ways, some explicit and others by allusion, the latter mainly through the modality of the signs, in order to provoke and engage the human intellect. The signs of God cannot be readjust off the face of the signs but require thinking and reflection. This is indicated in the phrase: *We will cause them to see Our signs ...* which suggests that the signs may not be instantaneously visible to the naked eye. The whole concept of signs seeks to forge a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* (38:29) A sign is also a portent and allusion to something other than itself and should not therefore be seen as the final message and purpose of the revelation containing it.

Approximately 750 verses, or nearly one-eighth of the Quran, exhort the readers to study nature, history, the Quran itself, and humanity at large. The text of the Quran employs a range of expressions in its appeal to those who listen (*yasma'un*), those who think (*yatafakkarun*), those who reflect (*yatadabbarun*), those who observe (*yanzurun*), those who exercise their intellect (*ya'qilun*), those who take heed and remember (*yatadhakkarun*), those who ask questions (*yas'alun*), those who develop an insight (*yatafaqqahun*), and those who know (*ya'lamun*).[2]

These and their derivatives (mostly occurring in the active verbal form) consist essentially of open invocations and encouragement to thinking that is not limited by a methodology or framework. *Meditate they not, then, on the Quran* (*afala yatadabbarun al-Qur'an*) (47:24) *Tadabbur* means concentrated and goal-oriented thinking provoked by the challenge to find something new or to solve a difficult problem.

Quranic references to thinking and the exercise of intellect occur in conjunction with basically five major themes: Belief in the Oneness and generosity of God (*tawhid*); reflection on the Quran; the human being and the universe; historical precedent; and thinking itself.

References to *aql* (intellect) and its derivatives occur on 49 occasions in the text. The typical Quranic expression, *ulu'l-albab* (those who possess vision and understanding), and its synonym, *ulu'l-nuha* (people endowed with intellectual abilities) occur 33 times in the text. Such expressions are frequently juxtaposed with the exposition of signs, such as in the sign: *Thus, God makes manifest His signs to you so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (2:242) or in the sign: *Surely, We made manifest the signs to you so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (57:17). Repeated references to pondering over the signs are variously nuanced such that they embrace within their fold the widest spectrum of people who may be endowed with different intellectual abilities and endowments.[3]

Al-Isfahani defines thought (*al-fikr*) as the power of the mind that facilitates access to knowledge (*'ilm*). Thinking (*al-tafakkur*) is the movement of

that power which is driven by the intellect (*al-'aql*), and this can only occur when an initial image of the subject is attainable in the mind of the thinker. Thinking cannot, therefore, proceed over something of which no image exists in the mind. This can be said of the self of God, for example, as we have no image on which to focus our thought.[4]

The human being can only think over the attributes of God through the observation of His signs. Broadly speaking, thinking proceeds over the whole of the created universe without any exception; indeed, the Quran repeatedly invites such in respect to both the physical and abstract aspects of reality, both in the present and in regards to bygone history that is only perceived by the intellect rather than sense perception. Often the Quran gives examples, parables, and narratives of other nations, and then follows them with the reminder, usually addressed to the Prophet, to recount the narratives of the past so that the people may think and reflect over them:

And recount to them the tiding of him to whom We gave Our signs. (7:175)

And there are the parables that We propound for humanity so that perhaps they will reflect. (59:21)

Truly, in that are certainly signs for a folk who reflect. (30:21)

A hierarchy of five perceptive-cognitive functions is also suggested, including and extending through hearing, sight, thinking, dhikr remembrance, and certainty.[5]

Given such a scale of intensified perceptive understanding, the Quran propounds the notion of *ulul'l-albab*, the thoughtful individuals who are possessed of proper understanding and response. *'Aql* is thus tied to the cognitive dimension of faith.

Significantly, the very term for reason and intelligence in Arabic, *al-'aql*, has at the core of its basic meaning the practical idea of "restraining" and "binding," that is, of holding one's self back from blameworthy conduct—being an interior self-imposed limit. Quranic commentators understand thinking (*tafakkur, tafkir*) as pondering and reflection, which is a mental activity and process, not an outcome.

Thinking (*tafakkur*) is considered as a form of worship of God if it is done with sincerity and good purpose. *'Aql* in its Quranic conception is also one that conceives the truth, and it is always in search of it. This conception of *'aql* precludes one that is rigid, arrogant, and misleading. Some have also drawn the conclusion from the ubiquitous Quranic emphasis on thinking that all Muslims must strive to be thinking individuals.[6]

Al-Qaradawi has quoted Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's (d. 751/1350) own observation as well as some epithetic statements, the latter narrated from other leading figures to the effect that "thinking for an hour is better than worship of many years," and another statement that "thinking for an hour is superior to a whole night of prayer." To this Ibn Qayyim added that "thinking is the act of the heart whereas worship is the act of one's limbs, and the former is

superior to the latter."

The pious caliph Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz (d. 101/718) is similarly quoted: Thinking over the bounties of God is the best form of worship. Abbas Mahmud al-Agqad went so far as to say that: Thinking—*al-tafkir*—is an Islamic obligation. Just as God Most High ordered us to worship Him by performing prayer and fasting, He also ordered us to think in numerous verses and in so many different ways, all of which vindicate thinking as one of the cardinal messages of the Quran.[7]

The Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge espoused with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression *al-tafaqquh fi'l-din*, that is, understands the religion, signifying a rational and inquisitive approach to constructing a Quranic worldview.

Islam, in other words, advises analytical knowledge and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely dogmatic approach. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions: Faith based on detailed analysis (*al-iman al-tafsili*) as opposed to undigested and uncomprehended faith (*al-iman al-ijmali*). The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the religious scholars of all the leading schools of thought. Thus it is declared in a sign: *But a section of people only that they become learned in the way of life and that they warn their folk.* (9:122).

We also note the distinction between thought-based knowledge and transmitted or received knowledge reflected in the twin juristic and hadith-related expressions of knowledge based on understanding (*'ilm al-diraya*), and report-based and transmitted knowledge (*'ilm al-riwaya*). The former is based on understanding and insight (*diraya wa tafaqquh*) and takes priority over the latter. Whereas *'ilm al-riwaya* relies mainly on memory and retention, *'ilm al-diraya* is based on cognition, understanding, and analysis.

Thus, if there are hadith reports, or any factual reports for that matter, which do not stand to reason and understanding, they would be most likely discounted and abandoned, with the exception only of devotional matters (*'ibadat*) which are based on faith and submission more than on rational analysis.

Another feature of the Quranic vision of thinking is indicated in its emphasis on wisdom and good judgment (*hikmah*) which signifies the quality of thinking, its regard for values, and its outcome. Wisdom and good judgment can easily be said to be more important than technical know-how and expertise, as it can guide expert knowledge as to its proper application and the attainment of excellence.

The Quran mentions *hikmah* twenty times, and in about ten of these it is immediately preceded by the word Book or *kitab*, which is a reference to di-

vine scripture—primarily the Quran, but also other divinely revealed scriptures. The text, thus, says with reference to Jesus: *And He teaches him the Book and wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel.* (3:48) The juxtaposition of *kitab* and *hikmah* is often contextualized by a reference to the sending of prophets who teach the people and guide them with scripture and wisdom (e.g., *wa yu'allimuhum al-kitaba wa'l-hikmata*) as it is said of the Prophet Muhammad: *And teaches you the Book and wisdom* (2:159) and: *Teaches them the Book and wisdom* (62:2 ff); the descendants of Prophet Abraham: *We gave the people of Abraham the Book and wisdom* (4:54); and of Luqman: *We gave Luqman wisdom* (31:12). The holistic, superior, and indivisible value of *hikmah* in the Quran is underscored in one of its signs to the effect that when God bestows wisdom on someone that person is indeed granted an immense source of goodness: *And whomever is given wisdom, then, surely, was given much good and none recollects no doubt but those imbued with intuition.* (2:269).

To mention *hikmah* together with the Book evidently means that the Quran should be read with wisdom and divorcing the one from the other by taking a totally dogmatic approach to the Quran goes against the divine purpose and intention of its revelation. To read the Quran in the light of *hikmah* thus means a comprehensive reading that reaches beyond the obvious meaning of its words to encapsulate the goal and purpose of its message and then also reflection on the ways and means of how its benefits can be realized for the individual and society.[8]

The repeated juxtaposition of the "Book and *Hikmah*" in the Quran led some commentators, such as the Successor, Qatadah ibn Diama al-Sadusi (d.118 H), Ibn Wahhab, the disciple of Imam Malik (d. 179/795), and the Imam al-Shafii (d. 205/820) himself to the somewhat unusual observation that "*hikmah*" is a reference to the Sunna of the Prophet. Many have taken and followed this view; but since the text does not specify such a meaning for *hikmah*, the word should convey its natural and unqualified meaning as I have depicted in this presentation.

Good judgment, insight, balance and avoidance of extremes, the ability to distinguish between truth and falsehood, and procedural accuracy are commonly associated with *hikmah* and *hikmah* as such becomes a dimension of evaluative thinking in. its Quranic idiom. Besides, when the Quran declares that God Most High endowed the Prophets David and Solomon and also the renowned sage Luqman with *hikmah*, it could not have referred to the Sunna of the Prophet Muhammad, as Sunna as such did not exist in those times.

The Quranic usage of *hikmah* reinforces the holistic quality of thinking. *Hikmah* also seeks to forge a close tie between reason and emotion (*'aql wa qalb*) thereby encouraging what is now known as emotional intelligence. This is how the Quran and also the Sunna often deliver their messages, for, unlike the modern statutory laws and texts, the Quranic guidance, commands, and

prohibitions are often espoused with appeals to the heart and mind of their readers.[9]

Al-Isfahani defined *hikmah* as the realization of the truth through knowledge and intellect and it is manifested in the performance of benevolent deeds.[10] According to another definition: Wisdom signifies comprehension of the truth and reality and the ability to avoid corruption in one's quest to attain perfection."[11]

Random House Dictionary of the English Language similarly defines wisdom as: Knowledge of what is true or right coupled with just judgment as to action. Wisdom is thinking informed by the light of the heart that often leads to action and contemplates its consequences in relationship with other relevant factors. This may strike a note with the renowned hadith in which it is declared that: Fearing God is the pinnacle of wisdom (*ra's al-hikmati makhafat Allah*)."[12]

It is presumably for this reason that the great religions of the world have urged the seekers of knowledge to combine it with wisdom. It is wisdom that confers a higher quality on thinking and helps knowledge to be used for the promotion of good giving it meaning and direction.

In an effort to train the individual to enhance his or her quality of thinking, al-Ghazali (d. 505/1111) discusses the two sources of knowledge that Muslim tradition has recognized. One of these is through human teaching and learning (*al-ta'allum al-insani*) and the other through divine teaching (*al-ta'lim al-rabbani*).

The former is externally transmitted from teacher to student, whereas the latter is conveyed by the Universal Intellect which is superior, more intense, and more effective than human teaching. This knowledge is internally acquired either through revelation (*wahy*), which is a prerogative of the Prophets, or it is acquired through meditation, thinking, and reflection.

Al-Ghazali subscribes to the view that the essence of all knowledge is centered in the inner self of the human person in much the same way as growth potential that is vested in the soil and seed, and it is through teaching that the individual's potential is developed.[13] These two aspects of knowledge, that is, the external and the internal, are complementary to one another. This is because no one can possibly teach or learn from any teacher all the sciences, some of which are learned through teaching but the rest inferred by the reflective thought of the individual. It is therefore important that the avenues of learning remain open both through teaching and through inner reflection, thinking, and illumination. This is another way of saying that all knowledge is acquired and developed through the senses, inner reflection and thinking, both of which partake in natural endowment and development through external transmission and teaching.

Al-Ghazali's views on the internal and external sources of knowledge tended to correspond with those of Ibn Sina (d. 428/1037), but which differed,

at least partially, from those of the second/ninth century Ikhwan al-Safa (c. 373/983). All knowledge, according to the latter, is acquired through the senses and none inheres in human nature. Knowledge that is developed through thought and reflection also originate in the senses. The same analysis is extended to the axiomatic knowledge of postulates that are derived and confirmed through the senses. In support of this theory Ikhwan al-Safa have cited the Quranic verse: *And God brought you out from the wombs of your mothers and you know nothing.* (16:78). All knowledge is therefore acquired knowledge, a view which may strike a closer note with some of the modern theories on the subject.[14]

Muslim thought in the middle ages did not admit the ontological distinction between tangible entities that could be sensuously apprehended and entities of a spiritual or subliminal nature. This may be said to be a more sound and realistic view of reality than is allowed for by the modern positivist doctrines of science. Being is manifested at various levels and in several forms, none of which is less real than the other. Arabic thought employed the notions systematized in Stoic theory that divide being into three locations: Verbal utterance, psychic representation, and reality—without this last in any sense having exclusive title to Being.

Al-Farabi (d. 950 CE) took up this view and assimilated psychic representation to the entities of reason. Others rehearsed this division with the addition of a fourth location, that of Scripture. Reality thus had a four-fold manifestation, depending on whether the subject existed immediately in itself or whether its like was graven in the mind (*dhihn*, psyche) composed of sounds, which together indicates the psychic representation, or was manifested in characters standing for sound and speech. All four have a basic characteristic in common which is existence (*wujud, haqiqah*).[15]

The Islamic and Western perceptions of creative and evaluative thinking both recognize this to be a skill that is developed through training and controlled exercise. It is through training and thinking that we adopt new patterns of perceiving reality that we are able to see differently and creatively. It is generally acceded that creative thinking and critical thinking go hand-in-hand and complement one another. Critical thinking means "involving or exercising skilled judgment or observation." Thinking is critical when it evaluates the reasoning behind a decision. Such evaluation must, however, be carried forth in a constructive manner.[16]

The purpose of critical thinking is to achieve understanding, evaluate viewpoints, and solve problems. In general, one's thinking is likely to become critical when concrete learning experiences precede abstract thought.[17] This strikes a parallel note, in its Islamic idiom, with thinking that is espoused with *hikmah*.

The famous yet controverted hadith: The first (being) God created is the intelligence (*awwalu ma khalaqa Allahu al-'aqla*), sparked prolonged discus-

sions among Muslim thinkers over many centuries over the implications of this statement. Among the issues debated was the priority of reason over revelation and the respective role of each in their mutual inter-dependence.

Another issue was whether the disparity among humans in respect of reason also affected the modalities of moral obligation. Some prominent thinkers including Abu Bakr al-Razi (d. 313/925) apparently advocated the primacy of reason over the revelation. This would be properly known as "rationalism," which deems the primacy of reason over revelation. This is different from "rationality" which means treating any issue by using reason without giving reason priority.

SOURCES AND INSTRUMENTS OF KNOWLEDGE

Commenting on the Quranic passage quoted earlier, Muhammad Iqbal observed that the Quran regards both self (*anfus*) and world (*afaq*) as sources of knowledge. God reveals His signs in inner as well as outer experience. The Quran thus opens fresh vistas of knowledge in the domain of our inner experience. Mystic experience and intuition, then, however unusual and abnormal, must now be regarded as perfectly natural and open to scrutiny like other aspects of human experience." But inner experience is only one source of human knowledge. The outer experience in the Quran, Iqbal continues on the same page, unfolds two other sources of knowledge—nature and history, and it is in tapping these sources of knowledge that "the spirit of Islam is seen at its best".

The Quran sees the signs of reality in the sun, the moon, the alternation of day and night, the perpetual changes of the winds, the variety of human colors and tongues, and in fact in the whole of nature as revealed to the sense-perception of man. The Muslim's duty is to reflect on these signs and not to pass by them as if he is deaf and blind *They have hearts with which they understand not. And they have eyes with which they perceive not. And they have ears with which they hear not. Those are like flocks. Nay! They are ones who go astray. Those, they are the ones who are heedless* (7:179), for he who does not see these signs in this life will remain blind to the realities of the life to come. The divine signs are observed through sense-perception using mainly the faculties of hearing, sight, and intellect: *Journey they not through the earth? Have they not hearts with which to be reasonable or ears with which to hear?* (22:46) The emphasis in this sign is on the faculty of reason and understanding, suggesting that not all of our information about nature comes directly from sensation, for if that were the case we would be no different from animals.

Frequent references to sense-perception as the principal mode of receiving the signs show the scientific/experimental import of the Quran. The Quran goes even further to suggest sense perception as the only avenue of knowledge, as the text already reviewed provides: *And God brought you out from*

the wombs of your mothers and you know nothing. And He assigned to you the ability to hear and sight and mind so that perhaps you will give thanks. (16:78) Knowledge of the signs is therefore acquired through the use of these faculties. In another sign, the Quran praises those who listen to the word and follow the best of it: *Those who listen to the saying of the Quran and follow the fairer of it. Those are those whom God guided. And those, they are imbued with intuition.* (or make the best possible interpretation thereof) (39:18). This sign apparently subjects the data of sense-perception to the exercise of intellectual selection. The text also teaches that sense-perception does not perceive all reality: *So I swear an oath by what you perceive and what you perceive not.* (69:37-69:38). Certainty (*yaqin*) may also be beyond the reach of human intellect, as the human mind may be blurred by the variables of time and space. What is deemed certain today may be uncertain tomorrow.

We also note that according to the teachings of the Quran, the universe is dynamic in its origin, finite, and capable of increase. Early Muslim thinkers do not seem to have grasped the Quranic emphasis on inductive reasoning and experimentation. It was indeed a slow realization for Muslim thinkers to note "that the spirit of the Quran was essentially anti-classical". Putting full confidence in Greek reasoning, Muslim thinkers tried to understand the Quran in the light of Greek philosophy, which in the beginning of their careers they had studied with so much enthusiasm.

The substance of Iqbal's analysis on this subject is also upheld by Malik bin Nabi (1905-1973), who understands the creative impulse of the Quran as the motivating force behind the efflorescence of science at a time when Muslim thinkers began to grasp the full impact of the Quran on experimentation and inductive reasoning.[18]

The dynamic conception of the universe in the Quran is also seen by its conception of life as an evolutionary movement in time. History thus constitutes the third source of knowledge in the Quran. It is one of the most essential teachings of the Quran, as Iqbal has further observed, that nations are collectively judged, and suffer for their misdeeds here and now. The Quran thus constantly cites historical instances, and urges upon the reader to reflect on the past and present experiences of humanity: *Customs passed away before you. So journey through the earth; then, look on how had been the Ultimate End of the ones who deny.* (3:137)

If a wound afflicts you, surely, a wound afflicted the folk similar to that. And these are the days We rotate among humanity so that God knows those who believed and takes witnesses to Himself from among you. (3:140)

And: *And of whom We created there is a community that guides with The Truth, and with it, it is just. And those who denied Our signs, We will draw them on gradually from where they will not know.* (7:181-183)

The Quran's interest in history as a source of human knowledge extends farther than mere indication of historical generalizations. "It has given us one

of the most fundamental principles of historical criticism."[19] Since accuracy in recording facts is an indispensable condition of history as a science, accuracy depends ultimately on those who report them. The reporter's personal character is thus an important factor in judging his testimony. The Quran says *O those who believed! If one who disobeys drew near to you with a tiding, then, be clear so that you not light on a folk out of ignorance.* (49:6). It is the application of the principle embodied in this sign to the reporters of the Prophet's traditions out of which were gradually evolved the canons of historical criticism.

A scientific treatment of history, however, requires a wider experience, a greater maturity of practical reason, and a fuller realization of certain basic ideas regarding the nature of life and time. These are in the main three, and taken together they constitute the foundation of Quranic teaching.

(1) The unity of human origin: The Quran states: *He creates you from one soul.* (39:6) And: *O humanity! Be God-conscious of your Lord Who created you from a single soul.* (4:1). But the perception of life as an organic unity is a slow achievement. Islam sowed the germ of this aspiration and it became a Quranic assignment of us to work towards its realization. Notwithstanding the fact that Christianity, long before Islam, brought the message of equality to humanity, the Roman Empire had no more than a general and abstract conception of human unity.

On the other hand, the growth of territorial nationalism in Europe has tended to stifle the broad human element in the art and literature of Europe. European colonialism was also inspired by a self-image of superiority. Europe assumed a superior image that non-European peoples could be freely dominated, exploited, and subjugated.[20] It was quite otherwise with Islam. The impulse of Islam was from the outset to make the idea of human unity a living factor in the Muslim experience that was to be taken towards fuller fruition.

(2) A keen sense of the reality of time, and the concept of life as a continuous movement in time: The Quranic view of the alternation of day and night as a sign of the ultimate Reality which appears in a fresh glory every moment and the tendency in Muslim metaphysics to regard time as objective—all this constituted the intellectual heritage and ideals of Islam.

(3) The merger between religious and secular values: This is a unique feature of Islamic thought which is distinguished by its attempt to bring harmony between them, probably for the first time in history. It was in the state of Madinah that we encounter a clear example where universally proclaimed moral values formed the criteria of political judgment. Political leaders and statesmen were expected to recognize not only the value of efficiency, but also of justice, human dignity, equality, and freedom. In his renowned *Philosophy of History*, Hegel (1770-1831) recognized that the unity between the secular and the spiritual took place in Islamic society and civilization long before it made any impact in the modern West: We must therefore regard (the

reconciliation between the secular and spiritual) as commencing rather in the enormous contrast between the spiritual religious principles, and the barbarian Real World. For spirit as the consciousness of an inner world is, at the commencement, itself still in the abstract form. All that is secular is consequently given over to rudeness and capricious violence. The (Muslim) principle, the enlightenment of the oriental world, is the first to contravene this barbarism and caprice. We find it developing itself later and more rapidly than Christianity; for the latter needed eight centuries to grow into a political form.[21]

The modern West followed the example of the historical Islamic world in demanding that holders of political power operate under a set of moral rules. But as the modern West harmonized the secular and religious only nationally, the international realm was free to operate under the dynamics of power politics and secular rudeness. This failure was a cause of the senseless violence that claimed over 100 million war victims in the twentieth century. Recognition of the danger of the purely secular politics led to the creation of the United Nations, yet even this effort was undermined by political realists who enjoyed a disproportionate sway among the political pundits of Europe and America.

Safi has rightly noted the irony that contemporary Muslim societies have unfortunately followed a similar course in decoupling the secular and the religious and now find themselves entangled in a crisis of legitimacy. Many Muslim regimes are driven by the logic of power and operate outside the realm of moral correctness. It is alarming to see that this decoupling has impacted the religiously inspired movements, which seem to succumb to the logic of power in their readiness to employ amoral--even immoral--strategies in their fight against political corruption and oppression.[22]

Obstacles to Correct Reasoning

The Quranic emphasis on pondering over the signs is also underscored by a set of guidelines to ensure a correct outcome of reflection and thinking over them. The text thus draws attention to a series of exclusions and factors that stand in the way of the proper functioning of intellect:

(1) Pursuit of caprice (*hawa*) which may consist of love, hatred, pomposity and prejudice that confound impartiality and sound judgment: *Had you considered he who took to himself his own desire as his god and whom God caused to go astray out of a knowledge, sealed over his having the ability to hear and his heart and laid a blindfold on his sight? Who, then, will guide him after God? Will you not, then, recollect?* (45:23)

And if you had followed their desires after what drew near you of the knowledge, there is not for you from God either a protector or a helper. (2:120)

But if they respond not to you, then, know that they only follow their own desires. (28:50)

And: *And obey not him whose heart We made neglectful of Our Remembrance and who followed his own desires and whose affair had been excess.*

(18:28)

The choice is between two alternatives: caprice (*hawa*) and guidance (*huda*); the former evidently renders obscure one's attempt to attain the latter.

(2) Pursuit of conjecture in the face of certitude: And surely conjecture (*al-zann*) avails nothing against the truth (*al-Haqq*). *And most of them follow nothing but opinion. Truly, opinion avails them not against The Truth at all.* (10:36)

And follow up not of what there is not for you knowledge of it. Truly, having the ability to hear and sight and mind, each of those will have been that which is asked. (17:36) Knowledge and truth stand in contradistinction with the pursuit of conjecture. Note that the text says one should not follow conjecture until it is established and elevated to the rank of knowledge. It does not say that one should avoid conjecture altogether. In another place, conjecture occurs side by side with *hawa* or that which they themselves desire: *They follow nothing but opinion and that for which their souls yearn.* (53:23) This is the kind of conjecture or opinion that is meant.

Knowledge is established by sense-perception that often begins with a measure of speculation and doubt but which is affirmed by the light of reason and conviction. Some commentators maintain that the main context for this guideline is religion: Thus it is said that one should not take speculative positions in matters of belief. As for scientific enquiry and pursuit of knowledge, conjecture is neither discouraged nor avoidable.[23]

The ultimate purpose of this engagement is to attain the truth. Once the truth is attained, one should then commit oneself to it and observe it: *And what else is there after The Truth but wandering astray. Where, then, turn you away?* (10:32)

Completed was the Word of your Lord in sincerity and justice. There is no one who changes His Words. (54) (6:115).

(3) Blind imitation of others: The correct exercise of reason in Islam is tied to personal conviction as opposed to indiscriminate following of others, hallowed custom, and precedent. These must be judged in the light of reason and abandoned if found deviant and misleading: The misguided will say, as the Quran provides: *Nay! We will follow whatever we discovered our fathers were following on it —even though their fathers had been not at all reasonable—nor are they truly guided.* (2:170)

And: *Enough is what we found our fathers upon. Even though their fathers had been knowing nothing nor are they truly guided?* (5:104)

This was the response that Prophet Abraham and other great prophets received from their detractors, but the text address them again and again that both you and your ancestors were clearly misguided. *Certainly, We gave Abraham his right judgment before. And We had been ones who know of him when he said to his father and his folk: What are these images to which you be ones who give yourselves up to? They said: We found our fathers as ones who are*

worshippers of them. He said: Certainly, you and your fathers had been in a clear wandering astray.(21:51-21:54)

Forsake those who took to themselves their way of life as a pastime and as a diversion and whom this present life deluded. (6:70)

*Is it that **your** formal prayer commands **you** that we leave what our fathers worship?* (11:87)

As we shall presently elaborate, indiscriminate imitation of others is widely held to be the single most damaging cause of the decline of creative thinking among Muslims.

(4) Oppressive Dictatorship: The Quran takes to task arrogant dictators and those who support them and follow them. Hence the plea of those who say: *Our Lord! Truly, we obeyed our chiefs and our great ones. They caused us to go astray from the way* (33:66) should be of no merit. In a number of other places the text denounces the Pharaoh and Karun for their oppressive ways who misled their people in rejecting the guidance that was conveyed to them. *Pharaoh and his Council but they followed the command of Pharaoh. And the command of Pharaoh was not well-intended.* (11:96)

DECLINE OF CRITICAL THINKING

I shall not retrace well-documented history that Muslim thinkers were pioneers in the creation of new knowledge. It was due to the impact of the Quran that, in contrast to the Greeks who excelled in deductive method of reasoning and logic, Muslim scientists distinguished themselves in inductive and experimental approaches to scientific enquiry. The golden period of Muslim science started around 700 AD and lasted until about 1350 AD. Great thinkers such as Ibn Sina, Jabir ibn Hayyan, Abu Bakr Zakarriya al-Razi, Abu Rayhan al-Biruni, Ibn al-Nafis al-Dimashgi, al-Khawarizmi, and many others have left a rich legacy of contributions to the advancement of sciences in anatomy, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, optics, etc.[24]

After the fourteenth century creative thinking began to decline in the Islamic world due to a variety of factors, including the Mongol invasion and burning of Baghdad, the defeat of the Muslim Arabs in Spain and the continuing crusades, the collapse of the Ottoman caliphate, and the ensuing onslaught of European colonialism. The creative impulse of Islamic thought suffered setbacks as a result. Muslims were also beset with many internal problems including the alienation of philosophers, scientists, and thinkers from the theologians, sectarian controversies, and the prevalence of intellectual conservatism and imitation of past authority (*taqlid*)).

Philosophy and the sciences fell into a rapid decline while more rigid forms of instruction and narrower curricula prevailed. It was argued that orthodoxy was being threatened and that there was a need to restrain thinkers in order to defend religion. The latitude and diversity of discourse that expanded the scope of religious sciences, theology (*kalam*), commentary (*tafsir*), hadith,

and jurisprudence (*fiqh*) gave way to narrower criteria of *kufr*, *bidah*, and *taqlid* and the so-called closing of the door of *ijtihad* (*sadd bab al-ijtihad*).[25]

More recently, a certain abuse of Islamic authority operated by a dogmatic radicalism has exacerbated the decline of creative thought among Muslims. The situation is not helped by the prevalence of passivity in popular culture concerning the dogmatic excesses of these ardent proponents of imitation of past authority (*taqlid*). One of the salient features of this mindset is a certain ignorance of the essential impulse of the Quran on creative thought. Malik bin Nabi put it succinctly that the crisis of a civilization and a society at a critical point of its history "is not the paucity of its material objects but the poverty of its ideas."[26]

WHAT IS *IJTIHAD*?

The Quranic appeal to rational thinking and enquiry is not restrained by the methodology of *ijtihad*. There is, in fact, no clear text on *ijtihad*[27] in the Quran. *Ijtihad* as a concept originates in the hadith of the Prophet and the practice and precedent of companions. The methodology of *ijtihad* which is the basic theme of the science of the sources of law (i.e. *usul al-fiqh*) is itself a product of *ijtihad*. It seems that the Prophet also saw *ijtihad* as a creative impulse rather than engaging in the technicalities of legal reasoning—as the *usul al-fiqh* later developed in abundance. When the Prophet spoke of *ijtihad* or when he approved of its application, he seems to have done so in terms of *ijtihad* qua creative thinking.

One would readily admit that imposing restrictions on thinking, even if it were possible, by cultures and legal traditions could be exaggerated, in which case it would be prone to acquiring negative dimensions. One would not, on the other hand, advocate free thinking that is not limited by some kind of goal-orientation and values. Even the actual process of creative thinking, as earlier noted, is a skill that could be learned and refined by stages to direct it into productive avenues. The liberal tradition of the West tends to impose minimal restrictions on thinking whereas Islam tends to take a more guided approach to creative reasoning. Whereas both the Islamic and Western traditions recognize the authority of reason as a criterion of judgment, the liberal tradition has, unlike Islam, isolated spirituality and faith from the ambit of scientific rationality.

However, the methodology of *ijtihad* was also influenced in the course of time by a variety of factors, including the political climate, the change of caliphate (*khilafah*) to monarchy (*mulk*), Hellenistic thought in relationship to analogy (*qiyas*) and its syllogistic components, and the rift between the religious scholars and ruling authorities.[28]

Usul al-fiqh and its proposed methodology followed a difficult course and became embroiled in technicality that had adverse consequences for *ijtihad*. What is needed now is to recapture the purity of this vital concept, to

make *ijtihad* as our principal instrument for originality and healthy adjustment, but also to revise and reform some aspects of the theory of *ijtihad* itself that are no longer responsive to the prevailing conditions and challenges of our time.

I have elsewhere discussed the theory of *ijtihad* and its related issues and space here does not permit engagement in detail.[29] Yet I conclude this section by suggesting, however briefly, that the conventional theory of *ijtihad* needs to be revised and reformed in respect of the need:

1) to recognize the validity of collective and consultative *ijtihad* (*ijtihad jama'i*) side by side with that of *ijtihad* by individual scholars;

2) to allow experts in other fields such as science, economics, and medicine to carry out *ijtihad* in their respective fields if they are equipped with adequate knowledge of the source evidence of Islam. They may alternatively sit together with, or seek advice from, those learned in *Shariah*.

Ijtihad has in the past been often used as an instrument of diversity and disagreement rather than of unity and consensus. Although disagreement must admittedly be allowed in principle, yet there is a greater need today for unity and consensus. Scholars and learned bodies should not perhaps encourage excessive engagement in diversity of schools and sects but try to find ways that would help to close the gap between them and encourage unity on principles. This may require policy guidelines for different settings and countries, and, if so, that should be reflected in our approaches to *ijtihad*. Certain guidelines may also be provided by thinkers and leaders to stimulate consensus-oriented *ijtihad* within the ranks of the judiciary and legislative assemblies.

Ijtihad has in the past been conceived basically as a legal concept and methodology. Our understanding of the source evidence on *ijtihad* does not specify such a framework for *ijtihad*. Rather, we think of the original conception of *ijtihad* as a problem-solving formula for the problems encountered by individual Muslims and the Muslim community. This would confirm our view of the need to broaden the scope of *ijtihad* to other disciplines beyond the framework of *fiqh* and *usul al-fiqh*.

According to a legal maxim of Islamic jurisprudence, there should be no *ijtihad* in the presence of a clear text of the Quran and Hadith (*la ijtihad ma'al-nass*). This maxim should also be revised. This is because of the possibility that the text in question could now be seen in a different light and given a fresh interpretation in a different context. What we are saying is that the legal text may need to be understood first and that by itself may involve *ijtihad*. Hence *ijtihad* may not be precluded if it could advance a fresh understanding of the text in the first place.

The persistent decline of critical reason among Muslims is due partly to the notion that the exercise of personal judgment and *ijtihad* ceased with the epoch-making works of the legists and imams of the past. Added to this is the prevailing mindset that a Muslim should follow one or the other of the estab-

lished schools of thought and abandon his judgment in favor of interpretations of the earlier centuries whose originators could have no conception of the necessities of the twenty-first century Muslims. Until about 1500 CE, independent *ijtihad* allowed Muslims and Muslim societies to continually adapt in the face of changing societal conditions and new advances in knowledge.

Unfortunately, as Muslim civilization began to weaken about four centuries ago in the face of Western advances, Muslims began to adopt a more conservative stance in an attempt to preserve traditional values and institutions. As a result Muslim thinkers became inclined to view innovation and adaptation negatively. For all the rhetoric and symbolic form of the neo-radicals that tend to dominate the audience of Muslims, the spirit of Islam is often palpably missing from their endeavors, while more than ever *ijtihad* is needed where women, education, and politics are concerned.

ISLAM AND THE WEST

Scientific rationality essentially reduces intelligence to the level of neural chemistry where mental and behavioral phenomena are understood merely as manifestations of physical processes. It tends to deprive us of our noblest dimensions (faith, love, beauty), separates the soul from the body, and the sensory from the intelligible. In the realm of economics, we are merely a producer and consumer of goods and is moved solely by our individual self-interest. This too is opposed to the Islamic viewpoint which also sees in us morality and transcendent faith.

This physicalist analysis of intelligence is now increasingly being seen as conceptually inadequate. The real question is whether one may admit a human dimension which is autonomous and irreducible to a physical mass. In Moravia's phrase "can one posit something which exists and yet at the same time is non physical? Do the rejection of the soul and the achievements attained by bio and neurosciences oblige us to hold that man is nothing but body?"[30] Recently these have been attempted by some creative thinkers to reconceptualize intentions of 'reason' and 'intelligence' along anti-materialistic lines drawing on the experience of older non-Western traditions, or even popular folk conceptions.[31]

Islamic philosophy—which mainly studies purposes, as against science which mainly studies causes—sees, in line with the Quranic teaching, the role of objects and events as signs of divine presence and action. Faith is understood by Muslims not as a limitation on science but as its vista for enrichment and perfection.[32]

The variant perspectives of Western philosophy and science are also behind the Western puzzlement why Muslims have not become more secularized. This unwarranted assumption has in the past led to mistaken assessments of Islam and continues to foster genuine misunderstanding concerning the real nature of Islamic religion and intellectual traditions. The misunderstanding is

unfortunately not unique to Westerners. For the majority of Muslims today are also woefully uninformed of the depth and scope of their rich heritage on the authoritative validity of reason. Thinking Muslims should work to vindicate the symbiotic relation of faith and reason in their religion and see it as a source of enrichment and contribution of Islam to human understanding and civilization.

CONCLUSION

This essay advanced a Quranic perspective on thinking, which is affirmative in critical and goal-oriented thinking and also provides a set of guidelines that ensures its purity and purpose from negative reductionist influences. The guidelines so provided are also rich in advancing a spiritual dimension with the understanding that thinking which is not informed by morality and faith can lose its direction and purpose and can even become harmful to human welfare. From the Quranic vantage point, the sciences of nature should be key to our cognition of the signs of God in the universe. For this may be instrumental in solving individual and social problems without interrupting the cosmic order and the human habitat on earth. The blatant disregard of ethical values in science has weakened scientists' sense of responsibility and contributed to the degradation of the human condition on the globe.

Since thinking is a skill that can be advanced by self-application and training, it is amenable to guidance, bereavement, and enrichment. Universities and institutions of learning in Muslim countries are generally short of resources, and those who have the means still fall short, to their detriment, of nurturing the culture of reading and research among their students and scholars. Centers of higher learning may do well to establish a new order of relationship between the natural sciences and humanities, and between all fields of knowledge and human welfare and also the avenues of benefit to society. The present-day education system is due for a reappraisal in order to instill creative thinking and breadth of vision among students and scholars that is informed by the inter-relatedness of the various disciplines of learning. This could be done, as one observer suggested, "by adding sufficient number of courses in humanities to the science and engineering curricula, by cross-disciplinary interaction and collaboration."[33] The main characteristic of the human sciences, from the Islamic perspective, is that they are not value-free and have to be incorporated within the value system of Islam that is informed by the ethical and human dimension of values.

It is ironic to note, however, that the vast majority of Muslims are wont to rote reading of the Quran which is patently vacuous and devoid of thinking. The Quran is usually read, committed to memory, and cited for its spiritual merit rather than intellectual stimulation and enrichment. This is evidently not the advice one obtains from the Quran itself Al-Qaradawi has rightly observed about the current realities of public education in Muslim countries that "the

system relies on memorization and cramming more than it does on comprehension and analysis. A typical weakness of this method is that the memorizer forgets as soon as the exams are over. But if what is learned is founded in understanding and comprehension, its substance will remain in the mind and will not be prone to oblivion so quickly."[34]

But the issue that we raise here is well-entrenched and originates in the overall emphasis that most educationists and jurists of earlier times have placed on the study of the Quran, Hadith and *fiqh* manuals, often calling attention to words and sentences of the text at the expense of comprehension and analysis. The basic approach to Quran studies thus emphasized correct pronunciation and memorization. This repetitive system of learning was particularly pronounced in the context of child education, although it was not confined to this framework as other and more advanced levels of Islamic scholarship also bore the same influence.[35]

Notwithstanding the profound influence of the Quran on the thoughts, mores, and cultures of Muslim individuals and societies, thinking by its nature does not lend itself to any predetermined framework and guideline. It seems that the Quran also seeks only to provide signs and signposts on thinking, but the subjective and innately individual bent of thinking is often inspired by imagination and insight which cannot be encapsulated by definitions and guidelines. A creative mind is unique by its attributes, and thinking that originates in a learned and upright individual is one of the greatest gifts of creation that can itself fit the description of divine example, or sign, of God on earth.

It remains to be added though that imaginative thinking has also been sparkled by sources and influences among great Muslim thinkers of other cultures and traditions—just as we note also that the great thinkers of history emerged in all regions, cultures, and religions. The substance of these statements is upheld in a renowned Hadith in which the Prophet instructed the Muslims to "seek knowledge, even unto China," and in another Hadith that "wisdom is the lost property of the believer; he is entitled to it wherever he finds it."

Knowledge and wisdom must therefore be ultimately seen as the shared achievements of humanity, endowed and posited by its outstanding and creative thinkers. This is also known from the fact that the outcomes of creative thinking are often shared and experienced far beyond geographical locales and frontiers—more so perhaps in the age of globalization.

It is hoped that the great thinkers and leaders of humanity make it a part of their agenda and commitment to narrow down the distances and divides between the intellectual and cultural traditions of the world and aspire them to the veritable vision of a shared destiny and wider human fraternity in their deliberations.

Mohammad Hashim Kamali[36]

PREVIEW *BOOK YEAR 13*

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

The Lessons in *Book Year 1* through *Book Year 24*, including *Book Year 13* presented here, are numbered consecutively in order of the revelation of a Quranic Chapter. Here, in *Book Year 13*, we begin with Lesson 82, that is, Quran Chapter 82 which is the 82nd Chapter revealed followed by Quranic Chapters 84, 30, 29 and, finally, Lesson 86, Quranic Chapter 83, the last chapter revealed in Makkah.

We are beginning to reach Arabic dates that have been recorded for important events in the life of the Prophet. The listing of the dates according to the Gregorian calendar are complicated and approximate only. That is why they are preceded by ca. For those who wish to know more about this topic, here is an excellent article by M. Hamidullah written in 1969 in the *Islamic Review and Arab Affairs*. Scroll down to the article.
http://www.aaiil.org/text/articles/islamicreview/1969/02feb/islamicreview_196902.pdf

The chronological order of the chapters of the Quran that follow throughout the series is based on the list accepted by al-Azhar University in Cairo[1] and is considered to be the official order. It differs greatly from the chronological order developed by Western scholars over the centuries and is much more detailed.

Quranic signs or verses (*ayat*) of each section (*ruku*) in a particular Quranic chapter are given in each lesson followed by a commentary and a Student Assessment consisting of an Example of the Eight Elements of Reasoning and questions or assignments in Developing Quranic Critical Thinking Skills.

We do not have a great deal of detailed information about the life of the Prophet Muhammad during the Makkah period. The information that we have falls in the various lessons, the Prelude, an Interlude or the Epilogue. Appendix 1 correlates the original Quranic chapters with their chronological order.

LESSON 82. CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE

Virtuous conduct, integrity or moral uprightness, the state of being whole and undivided or a sense of inner and outer unity develops through moral discipline. It produces the attitude of God-consciousness (*taqwa*) when the discipline of prayer, fasting, giving the purifying alms, and pilgrimage is practiced. People are commanded to guard strictly their habit of formal prayers and stand before God in a devout frame of mind, (2:238) to pay the purifying alms, (98:5) to spend in charity secretly and openly (25:29)—a beautiful loan to God (72:20)—a bargain that will never fail, (25:29) involving a glad tidings for the believers (22:34) and a cause of prosperity (31:5) and spiritual joy. (20:139) Those people who follow these principles are on the right path towards the moral trait of integrity under the true guidance of the Lord. (31:5; 97:5) They remove the stain of evil from the people (11:114) and help them refrain from shameful and unjust deeds. (29:45) It is the practice of all believing people that when God grants them power in the land, they enjoin the right and forbid the wrong.

QURANIC CHAPTER 82: THE SPLITTING APART (AL-INFITAR)

Makkah: *When the heaven will be split apart* (82:1)
and when the stars will be scattered (82:2)
and when the seas will be caused to gush forth (82:3)
and when the graves will be scattered about (82:4)
every soul would know what it put forward
and what it postponed. (82:5)
O human being! What deluded ***you***
as to ***your*** *generous Lord,* (82:6)
He Who created thee, then, shaped ***you*** *in proportion.* (82:7)
He composed ***you*** *in whichever form He willed.* (82:8)
No indeed! Nay! You deny this way of life! (82:9)
And, truly, there are ones who guard over you, (82:10)
ones who are generous scribes. (82:11)
They know whatever you accomplish. (82:12)
Truly, the pious will be in bliss. (82:13)
And, truly, the ones who act immorally will be in hellfire. (82:14)
They will roast on the Day of Judgment. (82:15)
And they will not be of ones who are absent. (82:16)
And what will cause ***you*** *to recognize*
what the Day of Judgment is? (82:17)
Again, what will cause ***you*** *to recognize*
what the Day of Judgment is? (82:18)

It is a Day whereon a soul will not possess anything to avail another soul and the command on that Day will belong to God. (82:19)

COMMENTARY°

This short chapter refers to the great upheaval, but gives it a special color. It has a different rhythm, deep and calm. It adds a touch of expostulation coupled with an implicit threat. Therefore, it does not detail the scenes of the great upheaval as in the previous chapter, where these scenes predominate. Instead the scenes here are shorter, in order to suit its quieter atmosphere and slower rhythm.

At the opening, the chapter mentions the cleaving of the sky, the scattering of the stars, the bursting of the oceans and the hurling of the graves as simultaneous with every soul's knowledge of its earlier and later actions, on that momentous day.

The second part starts with a remonstration combined with an implicit threat to man who is the recipient of abundant grace but who shows no gratitude for it. *No indeed! Nay! You deny this way of life! And, truly, there are ones who guard over you, ones who are generous scribes. They know whatever you accomplish. Truly, the pious will be in bliss. And, truly, the ones who act immorally will be in hellfire. They will roast on the Day of Judgment. And they will not be of ones who are absent.* (82:9-82:16)

The final part gives an idea of how fearful the Day of Judgment is, how everyone is absolutely helpless and how all power belongs to God: *And what will cause **you** to recognize what the Day of Judgment is? Again, what will cause **you** to recognize what the Day of Judgment is? It is a Day whereon a soul will not possess anything to avail another soul and the command on that Day will belong to God.* (82:17-82:19) Thus, the chapter represents yet another way of portraying the same basic principles stressed in this thirtieth part of the Quran in various methods and styles.

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When the sky is cleft asunder, when the stars are scattered, when the oceans are made to explode, when the graves are hurled about, each soul shall know its earlier actions and its later ones. (82:1-82:5)

The violent upheaval in the universe causes the stars to scatter after they have been held together by a system which makes every star stick to its orbit, even though its movement is exceedingly fast. If this system is broken, as will happen when the life of the stars comes to its end, they will just disappear in the wide space, as does a particle of dust running loose.

The explosion of the oceans may refer to their being overfull to

the extent that they swallow all dry land and rivers. The hurling about of the graves may be a result of one of the events mentioned above. It may also be a separate event which occurs on that eventful day. As these graves are hurled about people are resurrected so as to face the reckoning and receive their reward or punishment. This is complemented by the sign which follows: *Every soul would know what it put forward and what it postponed.* (82:5) That is, each soul shall come face to face with what it has done and what it has left behind of the consequences of its actions; or, what it has enjoyed in this present life and what it has saved for the hereafter. Such knowledge, however, will accompany these horrific events. It will indeed be part of them, for it terrifies the soul no less than any of the other events.

The Arabic expression used here may be translated literally as: A soul shall know. It is, however, in Arabic a neater and more effective denotation of each soul shall know. Furthermore, such knowledge by every soul is not the end of the matter. It has consequences which are as violent as the scenes portrayed here of the great upheaval. These consequences are merely implied, not stated, and this is even more effective.

After this opening which alerts people's senses and consciences, the chapter, by means of gentle remonstrance coupled with an implicit threat, touches the hearts of men who busy themselves with trivialities. It reminds man of God's very first act of grace towards him, namely, his molding in such an upright, perfectly proportioned form. God could have easily given him any form He wished. Yet man is ungrateful: (82:6-82:8) The address appeals to a person's most noble quality, his humanity, which distinguishes him from all other creatures and assigns to him the highest position among them. This quality represents God's gracious blessing to man and His abundant generosity.

This appeal is immediately followed by a gentle remonstrance: *O human being! What deluded you as to your generous Lord.* (82:6) What makes you neglect your duties to your Lord and behave impudently towards Him when He has given you your humanity which raises you above all His creation and provides you with the ability to distinguish between right and wrong. A few details of God's generosity are then added: *O human being! What deluded you as to your generous Lord, He Who created you, then, shaped you in proportion.* (82:6-82:7) It is an address which appeals straight to our heart. He listens to God's remonstrance as He reminds him of His grace while he continues with his erring ways and impudent behavior towards Him.

A lot may be said about every other system of the human body.

But wonderful as these systems are, the human being may have them in common with animals. He, however, is privileged to possess his unique mental and spiritual qualities, regarded in this chapter as a special favor from God. After the chapter has dealt with humanity, it mentions the perfection of his creation and the right proportioning of his mold: *O human being! What deluded you as to your generous Lord, He Who created you, then, shaped you in proportion.* (82:6-82:7)

Let us reflect on our powers of comprehension, the nature of which is unknown to us. The mind is the medium of comprehension but the working of our minds and how they function remain to us incomprehensible. If we suppose that what we grasp is transmitted to the brain through the nerves, where and how does the brain store its information? If we compare the brain to a magnetic recording tape, every man needs in his average lifetime of sixty years a great many billion meters on which to record such a huge multitude of pictures, words, meanings, feelings and responses so that he may, as he actually does, remember them several decades later. Furthermore, how does man sort out individual words, meanings, events and pictures to mold them together in a sort of coherent education? How does he transform information and experiences into knowledge?

Yet this is by no means the most significant of our distinctive qualities. There is that wonderful ray of God's spirit which provides a link between us and the beauty of the universe and its Creator. As this link is established, we can experience at clear, bright moments a sense of communion with the infinite, the absolute, which prepares us for a blissful eternal life in God's paradise. Yet we have no power to comprehend the nature of our spirit, which is God's greatest favor to us and which makes us a human being. Therefore, God addresses us by this quality "O human being!" He then remonstrates with us directly: *O human being! What deluded you as to your generous Lord?* Thus, we are reminded of God's greatest favor, but we stand impudent, negligent of our duties, unashamed and ungrateful. But man does not need more than to realize the source of this remonstrance and what attitude he adopts when we stand before our Lord to be absolutely overwhelmed by shame: *O human being! What deluded you as to your generous Lord, He Who created you, then, shaped you in proportion. He composed you in whichever form He willed. No indeed! Nay! You deny this way of life!* (82:6-82:8)

The chapter moves on to explain the reason for our impudence and negligence, namely, denial of the Last Judgment. It emphatically confirms the reality of reckoning, reward and punishment: (82:9-82:16) The English expression, *no indeed* is used here to render the

meaning of the Arabic word, *kalla*, which is a command to desist and an indication of a change of subject and style. Therefore, the following signs are in the form of a statement.

You think that reckoning and accountability are falsehoods, and this is precisely the cause of your impudence and negligence of duties. *No indeed! Nay! You deny this way of life!* (82:9) How can any person disbelieve in the judgment and still lead a life based on goodness and right guidance? Some people may achieve a higher degree of faith: they worship God because they love Him, neither out of fear of punishment nor in hope of reward. But these people continue to believe in the Last Judgement. They fear it and look forward to it at the same time, because they hope to be with their beloved Lord. When man, however, flatly rejects the Day of Judgment he will be devoid of politeness and light; his heart and conscience are dead.

You deny the Day of Judgment when you will certainly face it. Everything you do in this life will be counted for or against you. Nothing is lost, nothing forgotten: *And, truly, there are ones who guard over you, ones who are generous scribes. They know whatever you accomplish.* (82:10-82:12) These recorders are the angels charged with accompanying people, watching them and recording all what they do and say. We do not know, and are not required to know, how this takes place. God knows that we are neither given the ability to understand it nor are we going to benefit by understanding it because it does not affect the purpose of our existence. Therefore, it is useless to attempt to explain by our means what God has chosen not to reveal to us of the world of imperceptibles. It is sufficient for us to feel that we do not live in vain and that there are noble recorders who note what we do, in order to be so that we are always alert and prudent.

We are then told of the destinies of the God-conscious and the wicked, which are determined by the reckoning based on the recordings of the noble angels: (82:13-82:16) The end is certain. That the God-conscious shall dwell in blissful happiness and the wicked shall end in hell is already determined. A God-conscious person is the one who consistently does right actions, i.e. good deeds, until doing them becomes his intrinsic quality. The adjective 'God-conscious' has connotations which fit in well with nobility and humanity. The contrasting quality, 'wickedness', carries connotations of insolence and impudence as the wicked indulge in sinful actions. Hell is a proper recompense for wickedness. The chapter emphasizes the certainty of this punishment: *They will roast on the Day of Judgment.* (82:15) Then it re-emphasizes it: *And they will not be of ones who are absent.* (82:16) They cannot escape it in the first place, nor will they be al-

lowed to leave it, not even for a short while.

Having stated what happens on the Day of Judgment, the chapter emphasizes again the certainty of that day, since it is denied by some. The emphasis provided here is in the form of a rhetorical question which enhances the mystery surrounding the object of the question. The chapter then states the complete helplessness of everyone, the absolute impossibility of giving or receiving support and that God is the absolute sovereign on that awesome day: (82:17-82:19)

The form: *And what will cause you* is a form of rhetorical question often used in the Quran. It suggests that the matter under discussion is far beyond our imagining and understanding. This is stressed here by repetition of the question before details about conditions on the day concerned are given: *It is a Day whereon a soul will not possess anything to avail another soul and the command on that Day will belong to God.* (82:19) It is a state of total helplessness when everyone stands alone, busy with their own problems, unable to think of anyone else, relative or friend. *It is a Day whereon a soul will not possess anything to avail another soul and the command on that Day will belong to God.* (82:19) He indeed reigns supreme in this life and the next. This fact, however, becomes so clear on that day that no one can overlook it, as the ignorant and the conceited do in this life.

The chapter closes with an air of fear and speechless expectation which contrasts with the opening air of violent horror. In between the two man is addressed with that remonstrance which overwhelms him with shame.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Each week, develop a heightened awareness of one of the moral traits that you have studied so far (belief, God-consciousness (*taqwa*) and virtuous conduct (birr). Focus one week on belief, the next on God-consciousness, etc. For example, if you are focusing on God-consciousness for the week, try to notice when you are being forgetful of God in what you do. When you orally express or write out your views (for whatever reason), ask yourself whether

you are clear about what you are trying to say. In doing this, of course, focus on four techniques of clarification:

1. Stating what you are saying explicitly and precisely (with careful consideration given to their choice of words),
2. Elaborating on your meaning with other words,
3. Giving examples of what you mean from experiences you have had,
4. Using analogies, metaphors, pictures, or diagrams to illustrate what you mean.

In other words, you will frequently: state, elaborate, illustrate and exemplify their points. You will regularly ask others to do the same.

Developing Criteria for Evaluation

When evaluating or developing criteria for evaluation, assess both yourselves and others, noting their tendency to favor yourself. Critical thinkers learn to consistently apply standards of evidence and proof to themselves as well as to others. We practice what we advocate for others. We are able to readily admit any discrepancies and inconsistencies in our own thought and behavior. We are fervent believers in what has been justified by our own thought and experience. We bring together the person we want to be with the person that we are. However, it is not uncommon for many people to be inconsistent in applying their standards once their ego is involved. We cannot become egocentric and overrate the positive traits of people who like us and underrate those who do not. If our ego dominates us, we become blind to our understanding. We promote whatever serves our needs and disregard whatever does not support what we want.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I focused on one moral trait each week and I was able to learn how to internalize them.

LESSON 83. CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT EMPOWERING CONSTANCY, COURAGE

HOW DO I DEVELOP COURAGE (DETERMINATION, CONSTANCY)?

In order to develop courage, you need to question what you learn. It takes courage on your part to admit that some ideas are dangerous and lack truth and to be true to your own thinking, questioning beliefs that you hold deeply. Courage is required to not conform to ideas that you know to be false.

It is the primary duty of the believers to participate actively in the struggle for the establishment of a social order based on peace, harmony, and justice: *And fight them until there be no persecution, and the way of life be for God. Then, if they refrained themselves, then, there is to be no deep seated dislike, but against the ones who are unjust. Fight aggression* (2:193) in which everybody is equal before the law, and people in authority work out their policies after ascertaining the views of the people. *And those who responded to their Lord and performed their formal prayer and their affairs are by counsel among themselves, and who spend of what We provided them.* (42:38)

Courage is having a consciousness of the need to face and fairly address ideas, beliefs, or viewpoints toward which you have strong negative emotions and to which you have not given a serious hearing. This courage is connected with the recognition that ideas considered dangerous or absurd are sometimes rationally justified (in whole or in part) and that conclusions and beliefs inculcated in us are sometimes false or misleading.

In this endeavor to realize the moral law in his individual and social life, the human being has often to contend against evil forces represented in the person of Satan. (15:35-15:40) But it is within his power to resist and overcome them. (6:99) Though the human being is always prone to weakness and susceptible to seduction by the forces of evil, yet his weakness is rectifiable under the guidance of revelation, (2:36) and such people as follow the law of God-consciousness shall be immune from these lapses (3:175) or be cowardly in their behavior. (3:122)

QURANIC CHAPTER 84: THE SPLITTING OPEN

Makkah: *When the heaven was split open* (84:1)
and gave ear to its Lord as it will be justly disposed to do (84:2)
and when the earth stretches out (84:3)
and cast what is in it and voided itself (84:4)
and gave ear to its Lord as it will be justly disposed to do, (84:5)
*O human being! Truly, **you** are*
*one who is laboring towards **your** Lord*
*laboriously and **you** will be one who encounters Him.* (84:6)
And as for him who will be given his book

in his right hand, (84:7)
then, he will be made a reckoning, an easy reckoning, (84:8)
and will turn about to his people as one who is joyous. (84:9)
But for whoever will be given his book behind his back, (84:10)
he will call for damnation (84:11)
and roast in a blaze. (84:12)
He had been one who is joyous with his people. (84:13)
Truly, he thought he would never retreat. (84:14)
Yea! Truly, his Lord had been seeing him. (84:15)
So no! I swear an oath by the twilight (84:16)
and by the night and whatever it enveloped (84:17)
and by the moon when it was full (84:18)
that you will, truly, ride plane after plane. (84:19)
Then, what is for them who believe not (84:20)
when the Quran was recited to them,
they prostrate not themselves? (84:21)
Nay! Those who were ungrateful deny, (84:22)
but God is greater in knowledge of what they amass. (84:23)
So give them good tidings of a painful punishment. (84:24)
But those who believed and did
as the ones in accord with morality,
for them is compensation, that which is unfailing. (84:25)

COMMENTARY°

The splitting of the sky has been dwelt upon in the commentary on other chapters. (84:1-84:5) One new element here is the submission and complete obedience of the sky to her Lord: *And gave ear to its Lord as it will be justly disposed to do.* (84:2) Another new element is the stretching of the earth: *And when the earth stretches out* (84:3) This means perhaps an expansion of her size or shape as a result of a disruption of the laws of nature which govern her and preserve her in her present shape. The statement, made in the passive, suggests that this will be carried out through the intervention of an outside force. *And cast what is in it and voided itself.* (84:4) This image portrays the earth as a living entity casting out what is within her and getting rid of it.

These short signs vividly demonstrate how both the living sky and earth receive their orders and instantly comply with them. Their obedience is a manifestation of their conscious and dutiful submission. The image drawn here has shades of humility, solemnity and tranquillity that are brought out in full relief. The impression it leaves is one of humble and obedient submission to God.

In such an atmosphere of conscious obedience, we are addressed

from on high: *O human being! Truly, you are one who is laboring towards your Lord laboriously and you will be one who encounters Him.* (84:6) O humanity! your Lord has made you in a perfect way. He has given you your humanity which distinguishes you from the rest of creation. Your humanity endows you with certain characteristics which should have made you more conscious of your Lord, and more obedient and submissive to Him than both the sky and the earth. He has given man of His own spirit and endowed him with the ability to communicate with Him, receive His light, ennoble himself with God's grace in order to achieve the highest degree of perfection attainable by man. This is no little distinction.

He who is given his book in his right hand is the happy one who was true to his faith. *And as for him who will be given his book in his right hand, then, he will be made a reckoning, an easy reckoning, and will turn about to his people as one who is joyous.* (84:7-84:9) God is pleased with him and rewards him well. He will have a lenient reckoning, that is to say that he will not be called to account for what he did in this life.

This image is the opposite of what happens to the afflicted one who has to account for his evil deeds and receives his record with reluctance. *But for whoever will be given his book behind his back, he will call for damnation and roast in a blaze.* (84:10-84:12)

So, the unfortunate one who lived his life on earth laboring hard but disobeying God and indulging in what is forbidden will know his destiny. He realizes that what lies in front of him is more suffering and hard labour with the only difference being that this time the suffering is greater, uninterrupted and endless. So, he calls destruction upon himself, for he sees his own destruction as the only means of salvation from what will befall him. When man seeks refuge in his own destruction, then he is certainly in a helpless position. His own non-existence becomes his strongest desire. His hopelessness is beyond description. *And roast in a blaze.* (84:12) This is the end from which he wishes to escape by means of his own destruction; but there is no way out.

Having portrayed this miserable scene, the chapter gives us a glimpse of the sufferer's past which led him to this endless misery: *He had been one who is joyous with his people. Truly, he thought he would never retreat.* (84:13-84:14) The past tense is used here because we feel that the Day of Judgement has arrived, after this life has ended. The indulgence and the joy had taken place in this life. "He lived joyfully among his people." He cared for nothing beyond the moment he was in, and made no preparation for the hereafter. He surely thought he would never return to his Lord. Had he thought

about the return at the end of his journey through life, he would have carried provisions to sustain him. *Yea! Truly, his Lord had been seeing him.* (84:15) Indeed God has always been aware of man's thoughts, actions and feelings. God knows that, contrary to what man may think, there will be a return to Him to receive the reward merited by actions on earth. This is indeed what happens when all return to God to meet their appointed destiny, when what God has ordained will take place. *He had been one who is joyous with his people. Truly, he thought he would never retreat.* (84:13-84:15)

This image of the misery of the one who was joyful among his people during his short life on earth has a counterpart in the image of the happy one who returns rejoicing to his people to live with them an eternal happy life, free from hardship: *And as for him who will be given his book in his right hand, then, he will be made a reckoning, an easy reckoning, and will turn about to his people as one who is joyous.* (84:7-84:9)

The chapter then refers briefly to some worldly scenes. People, however, continue to overlook the evidence such scenes provide of the deliberate planning that has gone into the making of this world. Indeed, this planning includes the creation of man himself, and his phases and transitions through life: *So no! I swear an oath by the twilight and by the night and whatever it enveloped and by the moon when it was full that you will, truly, ride plane after plane.* (84:16-84:19) The oath, which is indirect in the Arabic text, serves to draw man's attention to these universal scenes. The connotations here are in perfect harmony with those of the opening of the chapter and the scenes portrayed there. The twilight refers to that period of stillness after sunset when the soul is overwhelmed by a deep feeling of awe. The heart feels, at such a time, the significance of parting with a beloved companion, and the quiet sadness and deep melancholy this involves. It also experiences fear of the approaching darkness.

What the night envelops is left unspecified to enhance the effect. *And by the night and whatever it enveloped.* (84:17) Imagination can travel far and wide as one thinks of what the night may conceal of events and feelings. But the travels of the imagination cannot capture all the images generated by the short Quranic sign, "And by the night and what it envelops." We are left with an overwhelming feeling of reverence which is in perfect harmony with the stillness and awe associated with the twilight.

This is another quiet and splendid scene: *And by the moon when it was full* (84:18), describing the full moon as her light descends over the earth. The full moon is always associated with tranquillity. The general impression formed here is closely associated with twi-

light, and the dark night as it conceals everything. The feeling is one of a complementary stillness and reverence.

This: *That you will, truly, ride plane after plane* (84:19) means, you will pass from one stage of suffering to another, as has been charted for you. The Quran uses the term 'ride', although we use the expression 'move onward', to denote the undergoing of various stages of suffering. 'Ride' is frequently used in Arabic to signify the passage through risk and difficulty. This usage suggests that difficulties and risks are like horses or mules to be ridden. Each one will take the rider to the stage determined for them. Thus each one will deliver the rider to a new, predetermined stage, in the same way as twilight, the night and perfect moon are predetermined. They eventually end with their meeting with God, which was mentioned in the preceding part. This coherent ordering of the parts of the chapter and the smooth movement from one point to another is characteristic of the superb Quranic style.

There then follows an expression of wonder at those who persist in their denial of the faith when they have all these signs and all this abundant evidence within themselves and in the world at large which indicates the truth: *Then, what is for them who believe not when the Quran was recited to them, they prostrate not themselves?* (84:20-84:21) Indeed, why do they not accept the faith? There are numerous indications in the universe and within the soul which point out that the path of faith is the right path. They are at once numerous, profound and powerful, so they besiege the heart if it tries to run away from them. But if someone listens to them, then they address him in a friendly and affectionate way.

The Quran addresses them in the language of pure human nature. It opens the heart to the truth and points out its evidence both within themselves and over the horizon. It kindles in people's hearts God-consciousness, humbleness, obedience and submission to the Creator of the universe. The expression, fall down in prostration, refers to these feelings. The universe is splendid and inspiring: it offers a multitude of signs, mental stimuli and moments of purity which combine to arouse in us a ready response and a willing submission. The Quran is also superb and inspiring; it links the human heart with the splendid universe and, consequently, with the Creator who made it. It gives us a feeling of truth about the universe which also demonstrates the truth of creation and the Creator. Therefore, the wonder: *Then, what is for them who believe not when the Quran was recited to them, they prostrate not themselves?* (84:20-84:21)

It is indeed amazing, but the Quran does not dwell on this for long. It proceeds to describe the behavior of the ungrateful and the

end which awaits them. *Nay! Those who were ungrateful deny, but God is greater in knowledge of what they amass. So give them good tidings of a painful punishment.*(84:22-84:24) The ungrateful shout, 'lies', but the object of their denunciation as lies is unspecified. In Arabic, omission of the object serves to widen the scope of reference for the verb. Thus, here we understand that the denunciation as lies is an entrenched habit and a characteristic of ungrateful. But God is fully aware of the evil they conceal in their hearts and He knows perfectly well their motives for denouncing the truth.

The chapter then halts its discussion of their state and addresses God's Messenger: "So give them the tidings of a grievous suffering," an unpleasant tiding for anyone who is awaiting news of his future.

At the same time the chapter describes what awaits the believers who prepare for their future by good deeds. This description is made in the form of an exception from what awaits the ungrateful: *But those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality, for them is compensation, that which is unfailing.* (84:25) This type of exception is known in Arabic linguistics as "unrelated exception". The believers, not originally among the recipients of the gloomy news, are then excepted from it. This form of expression serves to draw attention to what follows. The unfailing recompense is one which is continuous and unceasing, and will be given in the hereafter, when people will be immortal.

On this decisive note the chapter ends. It is a chapter of short yet immensely powerful signs.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

LEARN TO EXPRESS YOUR FEELINGS

Those who have been habitually praised for uncritically accepting others' claims may feel the rug pulled out from under them for a while when expected to think for themselves. Be emotionally supported in these circumstances and encouraged to express the natural hesitancy, discomfort, or anxiety you may experience so you may work your way through these feelings. A willingness to consider unpopular beliefs develops by degrees. You should exercise discretion beginning first with mildly unpopular rather than with extremely un-

popular beliefs. If, during the course of the year, an idea or suggestion which at first sounded 'crazy' was proven valuable, you can later be reminded of it, and discuss it at length, and compare it to other events.

Courage is fostered through a consistently open-minded atmosphere. You should be encouraged to honestly consider or doubt any belief. You who disagree with or doubt your peers should be given support. Raise probing questions regarding unpopular ideas which you have hitherto been discouraged from considering. Model intellectual courage by playing devil's advocate. Why does this idea bother you?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I kept an intellectual journal where I described a situation that was emotionally significant to me, that I deeply cared about.
I responded to the situation and wrote about it in my journal.
I realized what was going on in the situation.
I dug beneath the surface.
I assessed the implications of my analysis.
I learned more about myself.

84(1). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS

WHAT IS PERSEVERANCE?

Perseverance is being willing and conscious of the need to pursue insights and truths despite difficulties, obstacles, and frustrations; a firm adherence to rational principles despite irrational opposition of others; a sense of the need to struggle with confusion and unsettled questions over an extended period of time in order to achieve deeper understanding or insight. This trait is undermined when others continually provide the answers, do your thinking for you or substitute easy tricks, algorithms, and short cuts for careful, independent thought.

WHAT DOES PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS MEAN?

Perseverance in goodness is an attribute of God: *And whatever you have of divine blessing is from God.* (16:53) and, therefore, it becomes the duty of every person to obey his own impulse to good: *And whoever volunteered good, then, truly, God is One Who is Responsive, Knowing.* (2:158) He should do good as God has been good to all: d*o good even as God did good to you* (28:77) and love those who do good: *And do good. Truly, God loves the ones who are doers of good.* (2:195) Believers hasten in every good work. As all prophets were quick in emulating good works, (21:90) so all people are advised to strive together (as in a race) towards all that is good: *Be forward, then, in good deeds.* (2:148) and virtuous. All good things are for the believers; goodly reward in the hereafter and highest grace of God awaits those who are foremost in good deeds: *some of them are ones who take the lead with good deeds by permission of God. That is the greater grace.* (35:32) Believers are advised to repel evil with what is better, for thereby enmity will change into warm friendship: *Drive back with what is fairer. Then, behold he who between you and between him was enmity as if he had been a protector, a loyal friend.* (41:34) It is often reflective in that students have to go back and think about similar problems that they had faced before and re-analyze them. They do not let difficulties, obstacles and frustrations stop them from pursuing truths with their insight (the capacity to gain an accurate and deep intuitive understanding of a person or thing).

QURANIC CHAPTER 30: THE ROMANS (AL-RUM)

Makkah: *Alif Lam Mim.* (30:1)
The Romans were vanquished (30:2)
in the closer region, and they, after being vanquished,
will prevail (30:3)
within a certain number of years.

To God belongs the command before and after.
And that Day ones who believe will be glad (30:4)
with the help of God. He helps whom He wills.
And He is The Almighty, The Compassionate. (30:5)
It is the promise of God. God breaks not His Promise,
but most of humanity knows not. (30:6)
They know only that which is manifest in this present life.
And of the world to come, they are ones who are heedless. (30:7)
Or if they reflect not in themselves,
God created not the heavens and the earth
and whatever is between the two
but with The Truth and for a term that is determined.
And, truly, most of humanity, in the meeting with their Lord,
are, certainly, ones who disbelieve. (30:8)
Or journey they not through the earth
and look on how had been the Ultimate End
of those who were before them?
They had been superior to them in strength.
And they plowed the earth and frequented it
more than they frequented it.
And drew near them their Messengers with the clear portents.
Then, it had not been God doing wrong to them,
but they had been doing wrong to themselves. (30:9)
Again, the Ultimate End had been misdeeds
for those who did evil,
because they denied the signs of God
and had been ridiculing them. (30:10)

COMMENTARY°

The chapter begins with three separate letters. In our opinion, that a number of chapters so commence served to alert people to the fact that the Quran is composed of letters they knew well, being the letters of their own alphabet and the sounds of their own language. Yet they cannot produce anything like the Quran. Indeed, it continues to challenge and defy them, and still they cannot match it. (30:1-30:7)

These letters are followed by a true prophecy that the Byzantines would regain victory against the Persians within a few years. Al-Tabari reports on Abd Allah ibn Masud's authority: The Persians won victory against the Byzantines. The Arab idolaters liked that the Persians should win, while the Muslims preferred that the Byzantines should be victorious because they were followers of a monotheistic faith, which was closer to their own beliefs.

It is also noteworthy that the opening signs giving information of future events include an interpolated sentence: *To God belongs the command before and after. And that Day ones who believe will be glad* (30:4) This statement refers all matters, in all situations, to God. It is a maxim that applies to all events: victory and defeat, and the rise and fall of states and empires. Indeed all that takes place anywhere in the universe is determined by God, and fulfils His purpose in accordance with His wisdom. Events and changing situations are only aspects of the operation of God's unrestricted will which is not subject to influence by anything or anyone. It is God alone who knows what lies beyond it and how it operates. Therefore, the best that we can do is unhesitatingly submit to God's will.

Such victory has been promised by God, which means that it will certainly come about in real life. *So have you patience. Truly, the promise of God is True.* (30:60) For, never does God fail to fulfil His promise. The facts of the matter are that His promise issues from His free-will and absolute wisdom; He is able to fulfil it, as no power can repel His judgment. Indeed, nothing takes place in the universe except as He wills.

The hereafter: *They know only that which is manifest in this present life. And of the world to come, they are ones who are heedless.* (30:7) is another stage in the chain of creation; it is one of the many pages of the universe. People who do not understand the wisdom of creation or the law governing the universe remain unaware of the life to come, unable to give it its true measure and value. They do not realize that it is a part of the way of the universe and, as such, will never fail.

As both God's promise of victory and the certainty of the life to come are related to the truth upon which the universe is founded, the chapter takes us on a round through the universe and through the depths of our own souls. It wants people to appreciate this fundamental truth which they overlook when they remain unmindful of the life to come: *Or if they reflect not in themselves, God created not the heavens and the earth and whatever is between the two but with The Truth and for a term that is determined.* (30:8)

It is a requirement of this truth that there should be a second life when reward for action is given, with good deeds being granted handsome reward while evil ones are fairly and fully requited. Yet everything takes place at its appointed time, without a moment's hurry or delay. That people do not know the timing of the Last Hour does not mean that it will not come. The fact that its time is unknown, however, tempts those who are deluded by the little they know of the outer surface of this life: *And, truly, most of humanity, in the meeting*

with their Lord, are, certainly, ones who disbelieve.(30:8)

The chapter then takes us on a different round, looking deep in history so as to reflect on the operation of God's laws that never change: (30:9-30:10)

Those past generations lived before the Arab ungrateful in Makkah. They were superior in power to those Arabs, and they cultivated the earth, opened it up and discovered its treasures, and built it up even better than these are doing. They had a higher standard of civilization than the Arabs and were better able to raise life standards. Yet they confined themselves to the outer surface of the life of this world, not delving beyond it. To them also came their messengers with all evidence of the truth, but they did not open their eyes and minds to such evidence. They refused to believe and so deprived themselves of the light that illuminates the way. Therefore, God's law of dealing with communities that refuse to believe applied to them. Neither their power, nor knowledge, nor civilization were of any avail to them. They had their fair retribution: *Or journey they not through the earth and look on how had been the Ultimate End of those who were before them? They had been superior to them in strength. And they plowed the earth and frequented it more than they frequented it. And drew near them their Messengers with the clear portents. Then, it had not been God doing wrong to them, but they had been doing wrong to themselves.* (30:9) Since they entertained evil, evil was their end. This was the right recompense for denying God's revelations and deriding them. *Again, the Ultimate End had been misdeeds for those who did evil, because they denied the signs of God and had been ridiculing them.* (30:10)

The Quran invites those who deny God's revelations to travel on earth so that they do not remain confined to their own locality. They must reflect on the ends met by those earlier communities and realize what their own end could be. They should know that God's law applies to all without favoritism. They should open their minds to the fact that humanity is one, the divine message is one and the laws that apply to all generations of humanity are the same. This is the concept the Quranic message is keen to instil in the minds and hearts of all believers. Therefore, it is repeatedly stated in the Quran.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and

resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What was it like to not understand or be able to do it?
How did you come to understand it?
What was that like?
Was it worth it?
Did it seem worth it at the time?
What made you change your mind?

Will the support seem to the reader to justify the conclusion?
Should I change the conclusion, or beef up the support?
What counter-examples or problems would occur to the reader here?
What do I want to say about them?
How am I interpreting my Quranic source?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I chose one moral trait to strive for in one month.
I focused on how I can develop that positive trait in myself.
I recognized that I was becoming defensive when someone tried to point out a deficiency in my thinking.
I owned up to my own ignorance on the moral trait and began to deal with it.

84(2). Critical Thinking Quranic Moral Trait Empathetic Altruism

What is empathetic altruism?

There is yet a higher stage of moral achievement described as selfless concern and love for the welfare of others or altruism (*ihsan*) which signifies performance of moral action in conformity with the moral ideal with the added sense of deep loyalty to the cause of God, done in the most graceful way that is motivated by a unique love for God. Performance of God-conscious actions accompanied by a true faith is only a stage in the moral life of a person which, after several stages, gradually matures into altruism (*ihsan*). Altruism is based on having a deep love for God. Love as a human ideal demands that the human being should love God as the complete embodiment of all moral values above everything else.

Altruism is the belief in or practice of disinterested and selfless concern for the well-being of others. Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another. Empathetic altruism is to believe in an practice a selfless concern for the well-being of others through sharing the feelings of another.

Empathetic altruism is understanding the need to imaginatively put oneself in the place of others to genuinely understand them. Students must recognize their egocentric tendency to identify truth with their immediate perceptions or longstanding beliefs. Empathetic altruism correlates with the ability to accurately reconstruct the viewpoints and reasoning of others and to reason from premises, assumptions, and ideas other than their own. This trait also requires that they remember occasions when they were wrong, despite an intense conviction that they were right, and consider that they might be similarly deceived in a case at hand.

Quranic Chapter 30: The Romans (al-Rum) Signs 30:11-30:19

Makkah: *God begins the creation.*
Again, He causes it to return.
Again, you will be returned to Him. (30:11)
And on a Day when the Hour will be secure,
the ones who sin will be seized with despair. (30:12)
And for them among their ascribed associates
will not be intercessors
and their ascribed associates with God
will be ones who disavow them. (30:13)
And on a Day when the Hour will be secure
that Day they will be split up. (30:14)

Then, as for those who believed
and did as the ones in accord with morality,
they will be walking with joy
in a well-watered meadow. (30:15)
And as for those who are ungrateful and denied Our signs
and the meeting of the world to come,
those are ones who are charged
with the punishment. (30:16)
Madinah (30:17)
Makkah: *To Him be The Praise in the heavens and the earth*
and in the evening and at the time of noon. (30:18)
He brings out the living from the dead.
And He brings out the dead from the living.
And He gives life to the earth after its death.
And, thus, you will be brought out. (30:19)

COMMENTARY°

The chapter then speaks about the truth of resurrection, of which they remain heedless, when it is part of the great truth upon which the universe is based: *God begins the creation. Again, He causes it to return. Again, you will be returned to Him.* (30:11) This is a clear and simple truth, with the link and harmony between its two parts or stages also abundantly clear. Bringing back creation is the same as its origination: the two are inseparable parts in the chain of creation, while the ultimate return is to the Lord of all the worlds who initially originates then brings them back so as to remunerate them for their actions in the final stage.

As the chapter speaks of resurrection, it portrays a scene of the Day of Judgment, painting the fates of believers and unbelievers when they are returned to life. It shows the absurdity of associating partners with God and the stupidity of the beliefs of the ungrateful: (30:12-30:16)

So the Last Hour, of which some people remain heedless while others deny it, arrives, and the guilty stand in despair, with no hope of salvation. They cannot hope for even a word of intercession by the false deities they claimed to be partners with God. They are without support and without a saviour. At that moment, they deny the false deities they claimed to be God's partners.

Therefore, we see the parting of the ways between believers and ungrateful: *Then, as for those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality, they will be walking with joy in a well-watered meadow.* (30:15) There they receive what gives them true happiness. *And as for those who are ungrateful and denied Our signs and the*

meeting of the world to come, those are ones who are charged with the punishment. (30:16) Thus, we see the end of the journey and the outcome for both the believers and those who do evil.

The chapter then paints other scenes of the universe and life, highlighting some of the wonders of creation, the depths of the human soul, and miraculous events. This round starts with acknowledging God's limitless glory as the night and day succeed each other, and extolling God's praise at night and during the glorious day: . (30:17-30:19)

This glorification and praise of God *So glory be to God at the time of the evening hour and at the time when it comes to be the morning! To Him be The Praise in the heavens and the earth and in the evening and at the time of noon.* (30:17-18) are stated here in comment on the previous section that shows a scene of the Day of Judgement when the believers win the prize of entry into heaven while those who disbelieve are brought to witness their own suffering. They also serve as an introduction to the great tour that immediately follows. They thus provide a smooth link between the previous scene and the forthcoming tour.

It is a continuous cycle: *He brings out the living from the dead. And He brings out the dead from the living. And He gives life to the earth after its death. And, thus, you will be brought out.* (30:19) that never stops for a moment of the night or day at any place on earth, in space, or the depths of the sea. At every moment this great miracle occurs, but we remain heedless of it because of our long familiarity with it. Not a moment passes by without a life coming out of a dead thing, or a living being dying: a small bud shoots out of a seed or splits a stone to come into a life; or conversely a branch or a tree withers away. Still in the heap of dying plants and trees a seed or a stone is ready to start the life cycle again, and out of that heap gases spread into the air or provide nourishment to the soil that becomes fertile. At every moment life starts in a foetus, a bird or an animal. A corpse buried in the earth becomes part of the soil and gives it vapors and gases that make new life matter and nourishment for plants, which in turn provide food for man and animal. A similar cycle takes place in the depths of the sea and in limitless space. It is an awesome, fascinating cycle if we would only contemplate it with insight, guided by the light of the Quran.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts**

(vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Did God prescribe mercy for Himself?
Can you describe a time when you found God's mercy?
How is the Quran a mercy to those who believe?
Who can best phrase this question?
Is there another way to put this question?
What is the advantage of putting the question this way?
How would you put the question?
We can ask questions about questions.

When have you enjoyed helping someone? When not? Why?
Did you help that person?
When is it hard to listen to what someone else has to say? Why?
Have you ever not wanted to share something? Should you have?
Why or why not? If you did not share, why did you not share?
Or: What were you thinking? Why?
Did you know you should not? Or: Did it seem okay at the time? Why?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I recognized that by defining something, I was giving it meaning.
I realized that once I defined something, the meaning then determined how I feel about it, how I act upon it and the implications it had.
I realized that there is often more than one way to define or give meaning to something.
I was able to turn the negatives into positives.
I was able to turn my mistakes into opportunities to learn.
I was able to make a list of five recurrent negative contexts in which I feel frustrated, angry, unhappy or worried.
I identified the definition/meaning in each case that was causing my negative emotions.
I was able to find a positive definition for each and then plan for my new responses as well as new emotions.

84(3). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT BEING FAIR AND JUST (NOT SELF-SERVING, EGO-CENTRIC)

Developing fairness requires the willingness and consciousness of the need to entertain all viewpoints sympathetically and to assess them with the same moral traits, without reference to one's own feelings or vested interests, or the feelings or vested interests of one's friends, community, or nation. It implies adherence to moral traits without reference to one's own advantage or the advantage of one's group.

The fair and just Quranic critical thinkers work to improve their thinking whenever they can. They want things for themselves, but they aren't selfish. They want to help other people. They want to help make the world better for everyone. They are willing to give things up to help others (when it makes sense to). They don't always have the right answers, but they work to improve their thinking (and actions) over time.

Fairness and justice is a divine attribute and the Quran emphasizes that we should adopt it as a moral ideal. God commands people to be just towards one another: *Say: My Lord commanded me to justice* (7:29); *truly, God commands justice and kindness and giving to one who is a possessor of kinship and He prohibits depravity and ones who are unlawful and insolent. He admonishes you so that perhaps you will recollect.* (16:90); *and I was commanded to be just among you* (42:15), and, in judging between person and person, to judge justly: *And when you gave judgment between humanity, give judgment justly* (4:58) *for He loves those who judge justly.*

All believers stand firmly for justice even if it goes against themselves, their parents, their relatives, without any distinction of rich and poor: *Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God even against yourselves or the ones who are your parents or the nearest of kin, whether you would be rich or poor.* (4:135) God's revelation itself is an embodiment of truth and justice: *Completed was the Word of your Lord in sincerity and justice.* (6:115) It is revealed with the Balance (of right and wrong) so that people may stand forth for justice: *We caused the Book to descend with them and the Balance so that humanity may uphold equity.* (57:25)

The value of justice is absolute and morally binding and the believers are, therefore, warned that they should not let the hatred of some people lead them to transgress the limits of justice or make them depart from the ideal of justice, for justice is very near to piety and righteousness: *Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God and let not that you detest a folk drive you into not dealing justly. Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness.* (5:8)

Justice demands that people should be true in word and deed: *They are the ones who remain steadfast and the ones who are sincere and the ones who are morally obligated and the ones who spend in the way of God and the ones who ask for forgiveness at the breaking of day* (3:17) faithfully observe the contracts which they have made and fulfill all obligations.

HISTORY

The elders of the Quraysh met for consultation. Some of them said: Muhammad is a person of fine argument. If he speaks to a person, he soon gets hold of him. Therefore, select some of your most honorable people, whose lines of ancestry are well known. Let them take their positions at every route into Makkah, at one or two day's distance, so that they turn away anyone who comes to meet Muhammad. People did just that. If any of them met a person sent by his people to find out about Muhammad, he would introduce himself to him, telling him his position among his people. He would then offer to tell him about the Prophet, saying: He is a liar who has been followed only by slaves and ignorant people, and those who are good for nothing. All wise men among his people have taken a clear stand against him. This would be enough to turn many people away. It is to this that God refers in the sign stating: *And when it is said to them: What is that your Lord caused to descend, they would say: Fables of the ancient ones!* (16:24)

On the other hand, if the person sent to find out about the Prophet is one to whom God has given insight, he would say: I am certainly a bad intelligence gatherer if, having reached so close, I am to return now without meeting this man and listening to what he says in order to give my people a true picture of him. He would insist on going into Makkah, where he would meet the believers and where they would tell him that all that Muhammad says is good and fine.

This was a well orchestrated propaganda campaign mounted by the Quraysh against the Quranic message. A similar campaign is organized in every generation by arrogant people who do not wish to submit to the truth despite all the evidence supporting it. Indeed the arrogant among the Quraysh were not the first to deny the truth or to scheme against it. The chapter draws for them a picture of the fate suffered by schemers before them, and their destiny in the hereafter. It shows them what they endure from the moment their souls part with their bodies until they receive their punishment in the life to come. All this is depicted in vivid images, following the inimitable style of the Quran.

QURANIC CHAPTER 30: THE ROMANS (AL-RUM)
SIGNS 30:20-30:27

Makkah: *And among His signs are that*
He created you from earth dust,
when, again, you were mortals dispersed. (30:20)
And among His signs are that He created for you
spouses from among yourselves,

that you rest in them.
And He made affection and mercy among you.
Truly, in that are certainly signs
for a folk who reflect. (30:21)
And among His signs are the creation of the heavens
and the earth and the alteration
of your languages and hues.
Truly, in that are certainly signs
for ones who know. (30:22)
And among His signs
are your slumbering by nighttime
and by daytime and your looking for His grace.
Truly, in that are, certainly,
signs for a folk who hear. (30:23)
And among His signs are that He causes you to see
the lightning in fear and in hope.
And He sends water down from heaven
and gives life by it to the earth after its death.
Truly, in that are, certainly,
signs for a folk who are reasonable. (30:24)
And among His signs are that the heaven and the earth
are secured for you by His command.
When He will call you by a call again from the earth,
that is when you will go forth! (30:25)
And to Him belongs
whoever is in the heavens and the earth.
All are ones who are morally obligated to Him. (30:26)
And He it is Who begins the creation.
Again, He causes it to return
and this is insignificant for Him.
And His is the Lofty Parable in the heavens and the earth.
And He is The Almighty, The Wise. (30:27)

COMMENTARY°

This great miracle is one of the signs of God's power. *And among His signs are that He created you from earth dust, when, again, you were mortals dispersed.* (30:20) It gives a strong hint of the close link between the earth and the people living on it, as it is from the earth that they were originally formed. Both they and the earth are subject to the same laws within the universal system. The great leap from the still image of dead dust to the bustling image of the highly sophisticated human being should encourage deep reflection on God's power of creation. It should encourage people to extol

God's glory and praise.

The next sign looks at the shared life between the two sexes: *And among His signs are that He created for you spouses from among yourselves, that you rest in them.*(30:21) People are well aware of their feelings towards the other sex; indeed, they are often preoccupied with this relationship. Very often they are motivated to a certain action but they seldom remember that it is God who created their spouses out of their own kind and gave them emotions and feelings. He it is who has made the relationship between the two a source of physical and emotional comfort, stability, spiritual friendship, and reassurance for both. The gentle Quranic expression of this relationship profoundly inspires our hearts: *And He made affection and mercy among you. Truly, in that are certainly signs for a folk who reflect.* (30:21)

The Quran frequently mentions the great sign of creating the heavens and the earth, but we often pass it by without reflection, although it merits long contemplation. *And among His signs are the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alteration of your languages and hues.*(30:22)

Together with the great sign of the creation of the heavens and the earth, the chapter mentions the amazing variety of human languages and colors. This must be related to the creation of the universe. Differences in climate and environment that result from the variations of the earth's position in the cosmos have a marked influence in producing such variety in language and color, despite the single origin of humanity. Scholars and scientists today note the great variety of human languages and colors but they do not relate this to God and His creation of the heavens and the earth. Instead, they undertake an academic study of this phenomenon, but do not pause to glorify the Creator who plans everything, visible or hidden. This is due to the fact that most people are devoid of knowledge: (30:7) Besides, the wonders of the creation of the universe and the great variety of language and color are only appreciated by those who have true knowledge: *Truly, in that are certainly signs for ones who know.* (30:22)

This sign: *And among His signs are your slumbering by nighttime and by daytime and your looking for His grace* (30:23) mentions certain universal phenomena and their effects on the different situations of humanity, pointing to the harmony within the great universal existence. It combines the two phenomena of night and day with people's sleep and activity in pursuit of their livelihoods, which God grants in abundance. God has ensured that their lives are in harmony with the universe: their need for work and activity is ensured by the

light of day, and their need for relaxation and sleep is brought about by the night's darkness. This also applies, in varying measures and degrees, to all living things on earth. They all find the universal system meets their needs and natures, allowing their lives to progress. *Truly, in that are, certainly, signs for a folk who hear.* (30:23) Sleep and movement are two conditions that are felt through hearing. Thus, the comment at the end of the sign fits well with the universal sign it discusses.

The phenomenon of lightning is part of the universal system. *And among His signs are that He causes you to see the lightning in fear and in hope.* (30:24) Some explain that it occurs from an electrical discharge between two clouds, or between a cloud and the ground, such as the top of a mountain, producing an air vacuum that gives the thunder that follows the lightning. In most cases, this is accompanied by rain. Whatever the cause, lightning is a natural phenomenon produced by the universal system God has set in operation.

As usual, the Quran does not give much detail about universal phenomena and their causes. It only uses these to establish a link between human hearts, the universe and its Creator. Therefore, it states here that one of God's signs is that He displays the lightning giving rise to both fear and hope. Both feelings are naturally experienced when lightning occurs. People fear a thunderbolt that results from lightning, one that could burn things and even people. There is also that obscure feeling of apprehension which lightning causes as people feel the presence of the great power that controls the universe. People also hope for plentiful harvests as a result of the rain that often accompanies thunder and lightning. Therefore, it is mentioned in the same sign: *And He sends water down from heaven and gives life by it to the earth after its death.* (30:24)

Moreover, when water falls on earth, it makes it fertile, allowing plants to grow, so as to make its surface come alive first with vegetation, then with animals and man. Water is the means of life; wherever it is available, life prospers. *Truly, in that are, certainly, signs for a folk who are reasonable.* (30:24) There is indeed much scope for people's minds to reflect.

The fact that the skies and the earth stand firm, following an elaborate system and moving according to plan, cannot come about except through God's will. No one can ever claim that either he or anyone else brings this about, or that it happens without a plan. Therefore, it is God's great sign that the skies and the earth stand firm and function by His command, obeying Him, without deviation, hesitation or delay. *And among His signs are that the heaven and the earth are secured for you by His command. When He will call you*

by a call again from the earth, that is when you will go forth! (30:25)

The final note that concludes this statement shows that all creatures in the heavens and the earth submit to God in complete obedience: *And to Him belongs whoever is in the heavens and the earth. All are ones who are morally obligated to Him.* (30:26) Although most people are neither devout nor obedient to God, the Quranic statement here means that all creatures in the universe are subject to His will. All act and function in accordance with His laws that never fail or deviate from their set course. They are subject to these laws even though they may be ungrateful. It is their hearts and minds that disbelieve or disobey, but they are nevertheless governed by God's laws, and He controls them as He does all other creatures. They have no option but to obey and submit.

This great tour concludes by restating the essential question which people remain heedless of, namely resurrection: *And He it is Who begins the creation. Again, He causes it to return and this is insignificant for Him.* (30: 27) The chapter has already mentioned the initiation of creation and bringing creatures back to life after they had died. Now this is repeated after mentioning a galaxy of God's signs, but there is also an addition here: *And His is the Lofty Parable in the heavens and the earth.* (30:27)

His attributes are not shared with anyone else. Nothing is similar to Him in any way. *And He is The Almighty, The Wise.* (30:27) He does what He wills, having sway over all things, and in His wisdom, He conducts the affairs of all His creation.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Clearly identify the assumptions the Quranic signs express and determine whether they show a sense of justice.

Consider how these assumptions are shaping your point of view.

Assumptions are beliefs you take for granted.

If this was the evidence, and this the conclusion, what was assumed?

Or: If this is what he saw (heard, etc.), and this is what he concluded?

Or thought, what did he assume?

Why do people assume this?

Have you ever made this assumption?
What could be assumed instead?
Is this belief true? Sometimes true? Seldom true? Always false? (give examples.)
Can you think of reasons for this belief? Against it?
What, if anything, can we conclude about this assumption?
What would we need to find out to be able to judge it?
How would someone who makes this assumption act?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I found that sometimes I am not fair-minded.
I was able to contrast the reasoning of a believer and an ungrateful person based on Quranic signs.
I gained insight into fair-mindedness and developing a sense of justice when I considered multiple points of view.

84(4). CRITICAL THINKING INTERNATIONAL STANDARD LOGIC (TO BE REASONABLE)

Logic is a word that has many meanings and uses:

1) Correct reasoning or the study of correct reasoning and its foundations.
2) The relationships between propositions (supports, assumes, implies, contradicts, counts against, is relevant to).
3) The system of principles, concepts, and assumptions that are the basis for Quranic Studies.
4) Reasoning that bears upon the truth or justification of any belief or set of beliefs.
5) Reasoning that bears upon an answer to any question or set of questions.

The word logic relates to the question of explanation. As human thought and behavior is to some extent based on logic rather than instinct, we try to figure things out using ideas, meanings, and thought. Such intellectual behavior inevitably involves logic or considerations of a logical sort: some sense of what is relevant and irrelevant, of what supports and what counts against a belief, of what we should and should not assume, of what we should and should not claim, of what we do and do not know, of what is and is not implied, of what does and does not contradict, of what we should or should not do or believe.

Concepts have a logic in that we can investigate the conditions under which they do and do not apply, of what is relevant or irrelevant to them, of what they do or don't imply, etc. Questions have a logic in that we can investigate the conditions under which they can be settled. Quranic Studies has a logic in that the Quran has purposes and a set of logical structures that bear upon those purposes: assumptions, concepts, issues, data, theories, claims, implications, consequences, etc.

The concept of logic also plays an essential role in critical thinking. Unfortunately, it takes a considerable length of time before most people become comfortable with its many uses. In part, this is due to people's failure to study their own thinking in keeping with the standards of reason and logic. This is not to deny, of course, that logic is involved in all human thinking. It is rather to say that the logic we use is often implicit, unexpressed, and sometimes contradictory.

According to the Quran to be logical is to be "reasonable" (*'aqala*), to use one's intellect (*'aql*). This course in Quranic Studies is to learn from Quranic logic. Events described in the Quran do not just happen. The sacred text's description of events make sense when you understand its meaning.

Questions should be asked with a method to them. Teachers should help students figure out the logic behind the sign (*ayah*) or signs (*ayat*). Their answers should always reference particular Quranic signs. How they learn to

support their answers by giving reasons and references to the sign(s) is important, not any specific answer that they give.

In many cases, Quranic learning has been through rote memorization and drills based on having memorized the signs. When students learn through this method, they are not logically informed as to what the Quranic signs are saying. They are learning only by association or rote memorization without connecting the revelation to how they think or how they chose to live their life. As a result, students learn to think of the Quranic text as something they simply memorize without ever understanding the meaning of what it says. In doing so, they do not integrate the meanings of the Quranic message into their lives, they do not "own" it. They rarely relate, that is, make relevant, what they have memorized to their own experience nor are they able to critique each by means of the other. They rarely try to test by making it a part of their everyday life. They rarely ask questions such as:

> Why is this so? How does this relate to what I already know?
> How does this relate to what I am learning in other classes?

With the method of memorization of the sacred text, very few students ever think that they need to implement what they are learning in their life nor have they learned how to do so.

The Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge mixed with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression (*al-tafaqquh fi 'l-din*), that is, "understands the religion." This means as a reasonable approach filled with curiosity to constructing a worldview of Islam. Islam, in other words, advises knowledge through analysis and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely rigid and authoritarian approach that teaches blind certainty and a closed-mindedness that results in an imprisonment of the mind so complete that the prisoner does not even know that his or her mind has been imprisoned. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions: Faith based on detailed analysis (*al-iman al-tafsilli*) as opposed to undigested and uncomprehended faith (*al-iman al-ijmali*). The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the clerics of all the leading schools of thought.

QURANIC CHAPTER 30: THE ROMANS (AL-RUM)
SIGNS 30:28-30:30

Makkah: *He propounds a parable for you from yourselves.*

Have you—
among those whom your right hands possessed—
ascribed associates in what We provided you
so that you share as equals
and you fear them like your awe for each other?
Thus, We explain distinctly the signs
to a folk who are reasonable. (30:28)
Nay! Those who did wrong followed
their own desires without knowledge.
Then, who will guide whom God caused to go astray?
And they will not have ones who help. (30:29)
*So set **your** face towards a way of life as a monotheist.*
It is the nature originated by God
in which He originated humanity.
There is no substitution for the creation of God.
That is the truth-loving way of life,
but most of humanity knows not. (30:30)

COMMENTARY°

When the human heart has seen God's great signs, gone over such horizons and looked at such a great variety of situations, the chapter then changes the tone of its address: *He propounds a parable for you from yourselves. Have you—among those whom your right hands possessed—ascribed associates in what We provided you so that you share as equals and you fear them like your awe for each other?* (30:28)

This comparison is stated in detail, step by step: You do not need to travel or make an effort to contemplate it. You do not accept that your slaves have even a small share of your provisions, let alone that they be equal to you. *And you would fear them just as you might fear one another?* You look at them in the same way as you look at partners who are free men, fearing that they might be unfair to you, or that you be unfair to them. Although none of this happens, you still suggest that it applies to God when His are the most sublime attributes in the heavens and the earth. It is a simple comparison that admits no contradiction or dispute because it is based on simple logic: *Thus, We explain distinctly the signs to a folk who are reasonable.* (30:28)

The chapter now exposes the basic reason behind this anomaly. Essentially, it is due to following one's own desires without reasonable basis or proper thought: *Nay! Those who did wrong followed their own desires without knowledge.* (30:29) Desire has no control, since it is merely based on people's whims, fleeting passions, fears,

hopes and cravings that have no rightful basis and no proper limit. This is a case of error that lacks any correcting guidance: They go astray because they follow their own desires. *Then, who will guide whom God caused to go astray? And they will not have ones who help.* (30:29)

Now the chapter directs the Prophet to remain steady in following the divine faith which is consistent and based on the pure nature God has given to people. It is a single faith that cannot be pulled in different directions, like the ungrateful who were divided into groups and factions according to their desires. *So set your face towards a way of life as a monotheist. It is the nature originated by God in which He originated humanity. There is no substitution for the creation of God. That is the truth-loving way of life, but most of humanity knows not.* (30:30)

This directive to follow the true faith is given at the right time and the proper place, following the great round of signs drawn from the universe and the human soul. It thus addresses hearts that are ready to receive it, while those that have followed deviant beliefs find all their arguments devoid of substance. They stand alone without support. This is the powerful authority that is the Quran and which no heart or mind can resist.

So set your face towards a way of life as a monotheist. It is the nature originated by God in which He originated humanity. There is no substitution for the creation of God. That is the truth-loving way of life, but most of humanity knows not. (30:30) They are subject only to whim and passion, lacking control or evidence. When you set your face steadily towards true faith, you turn away from everything else. *So set your face towards a way of life as a monotheist. It is the nature originated by God in which He originated humanity. There is no substitution for the creation of God. That is the truth-loving way of life, but most of humanity knows not.* (30:30) Thus the chapter links human nature with the nature of this faith. Both are made by God, in accordance with the law of existence; both are mutually harmonious in their natures and objectives. It is God who has created man and revealed this religion so that it can regulate human life and conduct its affairs, healing man of ills and deviation. God certainly knows best what He has created. Human nature is set on a firm basis, and so is divine religion. When people deviate from the proper path of nature, only divine religion turns them back to it, since it is in full harmony with both human and universal nature. Because they do not know, they follow their desires and deviate from the true path that leads to true happiness.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What does it mean to be a monotheist?

What does it mean to be reasonable?

How would explain these signs to someone else?

Does what you say follow from the evidence that the signs give?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to relate the content of the above signs to practical situations in my life.

I knew that I had connected the Quranic message when I was able to tell someone in my own words what this sign says.

84(5). CRITICAL THINKING INTERNATIONAL STANDARD DEFINITIVE (TO BE PRECISE)

Definitive means to be conclusive, final, ultimate, precise: (*muhkama*). Definitive indicates that something is exact and accurate. It is an important aspect of Quranic critical thinking. It is part of strategies such as clarifying issues, conclusions, or beliefs and clarifying and analyzing the meanings of words and phrases. Not only is definitive a standard to be used when analyzing the Quranic message, but in expressing the Quranic message as well. That is, precision of expression is implied in the above strategies and forms an important part of reasoned dialogue and dialectic.

QURANIC CHAPTER 30: THE ROMANS (AL-RUM) SIGNS 30:31-30:53

Makkah: *Be ones who turn in repentance to Him*
and be God-conscious and perform the formal prayer
and be not among the ones who are polytheists (30:31)
or of those who separated and divided their way of life
and had been partisans,
each party is glad with what they have. (30:32)
And when harm afflicted humanity,
they call to their Lord
as ones who turn in repentance to Him.
When He caused them, again, to experience His mercy,
that is when a group of people among them
ascribe partners with their Lord, (30:33)
for they are ungrateful for what We gave them.
Then, take joy; you will know. (30:34)
Or caused We to descend to them
an authority that it assert
what they had been ascribing
as partners with Him? (30:35)
And when We caused humanity to experience mercy,
they were glad of it.
But when an evil deed lights on them
because of what their hands put forward,
that is when they are in despair. (30:36)
Consider they that God
extends the provision for whom He wills
and confines it for whom He wills?
Truly, in that are signs
for a folk who believe. (30:37)
So give to possessors of kinship rightfully

and to the needy and to the traveler of the way.
That is better for those
who want the Countenance of God.
And those, they are the ones who prosper. (30:38)
And what you gave in usury in order
that it swell the wealth of humanity
swells not with God.
And what you gave in purifying alms,
wanting the Countenance of God, then,
those, they are the ones who will receive manifold. (30:39)
God is He Who created you.
Again, He provided for you and, again,
He will cause you to die.
Again, He will give you life.
Is there among your ascribed associates with Him
who accomplish anything of that?
Glory be to Him! Exalted is He
above partners they ascribe! (30:40)
Corruption was manifested on the dry land and the sea
because of what the hands of humanity earned.
He causes them to experience some of what they did,
so that perhaps they will return repentant. (30:41)
Say: Journey through the earth;
then, look on how had been the Ultimate End
of those who were before.
Most of them had been ones who are polytheists. (30:42)
*So set **your** face to the truth-loving way of life*
before that Day approaches from God
and there is no turning back.
They will be split up on that Day. (30:43)
Whoever was ungrateful, his ingratitude is on him.
Whoever did as one in accord with morality
will be arranging provision for themselves. (30:44)
And He gives recompense to those who believed
and did as the ones in accord with morality
from His grace.
Truly, He loves not the ones who are ungrateful. (30:45)
Among His signs are that He sends the winds
as ones that give good tidings
and causes you to experience His mercy
and so that the boats run at His command
and that you be looking for His grace
so that perhaps you will give thanks. (30:46)

And, certainly, We sent Messengers before you
to their own folk.
They drew near them with the clear portents.
Then, We requited those who sinned.
And it had been an obligation on Us
to help ones who believe. (30:47)
God is He Who sends the winds so they raise clouds.
He extends them in the heaven how He wills
and He makes them into pieces until you see rain drops go forth
from their midst.
That is when He lit it on whomever
He wills of His servants.
That is when they rejoice at the good tidings. (30:48)
And, truly, they had been
—even before it is sent down on them—
before that, ones who are seized with despair. (30:49)
Look on the effects of the mercy of God,
how He gives life to the earth after its death!
Truly, that! He is One Who Gives Life to the dead
and He is Powerful over everything. (30:50)
And if We sent a wind and they saw fields,
ones that are yellowing,
they would stay ungrateful after that. (30:51)
Then, truly, you will not cause the dead to hear
nor will you cause the unwilling to hear,
to hear the calling to them
when they turned as ones who draw back. (30:52)
And you are not one who guides
the unwilling to see from their fallacy.
You cause none to hear
but those who believe in Our signs.
And they are ones who submit to God. (30:53)

COMMENTARY°

This section of the chapter follows its main line, looking at the universal expanse to which people's lives and events are related. It is in this great expanse that we see how the laws governing life and the universe operate in harmony with the laws of the true faith, suffering no conflict or contradiction.

God's revelations are given to the Prophet to bring life to hearts and souls. Yet they neither listen nor follow guidance. The chapter also takes us on a round in which we look at the stages of creation of humans and their lives until they return to their Lord. At that time,

no excuse or justification will benefit the wrongdoers. The chapter then concludes with reassuring the Prophet. It directs him to show more patience until God's promise is fulfilled, as it certainly will be.

These signs: (30:33-30:37) draw a picture of the human soul that does not rely on solid concepts, or follow clear lines. It thus vacillates between sudden reactions, in response to conflicting influences or events. Thus, when harm touches such people, they turn to God, realizing that only He can save them. Yet when the affliction is over, and things are comfortable again, with God bestowing His grace on them: *And when harm afflicted humanity, they call to their Lord as ones who turn in repentance to Him. When He caused them, again, to experience His mercy, that is when a group of people among them ascribe partners with their Lord.* (30:33) These are they who do not follow true faith and who do not benefit from the light it gives to the faithful. Ease and comfort remove the emergency that made them turn to God for support and protection. They forget their earlier hardship. Thus, rather than maintain the path of turning to God and of being grateful to Him, they disbelieve in His guidance and the grace He has bestowed on them.

A warning is given in the first instance to those ungrateful who opposed the Prophet's message, making it clear that they belong to this group: *For they are ungrateful for what We gave them. Then, take joy; you will know.* (30:34) It is a serious threat that sends terror into their hearts. People fear threats issued by rulers or presidents. How then will they react to a threat from the Creator of this universe, He who brought it into existence by merely saying to it: Be?

Having delivered this stern warning, the chapter questions them about the basis of their associating partners with God when it is He who bestows His grace upon them: *Or caused We to descend to them an authority that it assert what they had been ascribing as partners with Him?* (30:35) No one should ever accept anything about faith from any source other than God. So, have they received any clear, powerful argument to warrant an attitude that is contrary to belief in God's Oneness? This is a rhetorical question, one that depicts the fallacy of all types of idolatry. At the same time it serves to state that the only proper and true faith is that revealed by God, with clear sanction from Him. Otherwise, it remains flimsy, devoid of substance.

The chapter then depicts a different situation showing people as they euphorically rejoice at any taste of God's grace. In contrast, they feel frustrated and hopeless when affliction befalls them: *And when We caused humanity to experience mercy, they were glad of it. But when an evil deed lights on them because of what their hands put forward, that is when they are in despair.* (30:36)

This image is followed by a rhetorical question that wonders at their attitude and lack of insight. In both situations of grace and affliction one consistent law applies. Both are the result of God's will. It is He who bestows grace and tests people with hardship, gives in abundance or in a scant measure, in line with His wisdom. This takes place all the time, but they do not see: *Consider they that God extends the provision for whom He wills and confines it for whom He wills?* (30:37) There is no need, then, for elation at the time of grace, or for despair during times of hardship. These are situations that befall people at different times as serves God's purpose. A believer sees in them confirmation that all matters ultimately belong to God. It all indicates the consistency of God's laws in all situations: *Truly, in that are signs for a folk who believe.* (30:37)

Since it is God who grants provisions and sustenance, giving in abundance or in small measure as He pleases, He indicates to people the way in which they can make handsome profit, increasing their wealth. This is different from what they think:

Therefore, give his due to the near of kin, as well as to the needy and the traveller in need. This is best for all who seek God's countenance. It is they who shall be successful. (30:38-30:39)

God Almighty issues this directive to those He has placed as trustees of wealth showing them the best methods for investment, growth and prosperity. This means sharing with one's near kin, the needy and stranded travellers, and spending generally in ways that serve God's cause: *So give to possessors of kinship rightfully and to the needy and to the traveler of the way. That is better for those who want the Countenance of God. And those, they are the ones who prosper.* (30:38)

At that time some people tried to increase their money by giving gifts to wealthy individuals, hoping that they would receive better gifts in return. The chapter tells them that this is not the way to achieve true growth: This is what some reports mention as the meaning of this statement, but it is a general statement that applies to all methods people use to usuriously increase their wealth. God also makes clear the way that ensures true growth:*And what you gave in usury in order that it swell the wealth of humanity swells not with God. And what you gave in purifying alms, wanting the Countenance of God, then, those, they are the ones who will receive manifold.* (30:39)

The chapter then discusses the issue of polytheism from the viewpoint of providing sustenance and earning a living, and how this affects their lives as it affected the lives of generations before them. It also shows the end of earlier communities and the ruins standing

witness to such ends: (30:40-30:42)

They are then asked: *God is He Who created you. Again, He provided for you and, again, He will cause you to die. Again, He will give you life. Is there among your ascribed associates with Him who accomplish anything of that?* (30:40) No answer to this question is expected. Indeed, the sign puts forward the only possible and negative response in the form of a rebuke, thus doing away with the need for a direct answer. This is followed by a glorification of God which denies partnership with Him in any form: *Glory be to Him! Exalted is He above partners they ascribe!* (30:40)

The chapter then makes clear that life situations are directly related to people's actions, and that when corruption finds its way into people's hearts, faiths and deeds, both land and sea also become corrupted, to the extent that corruption becomes the order of the day: *Corruption was manifested on the dry land and the sea because of what the hands of humanity earned.* (30:41) This spreading of pollution across the land and sea does not happen by coincidence. It is a manifestation of the working of God's laws. The reason being: *He causes them to experience some of what they did.* (30:41) They will thus suffer the consequences of the evil they do and the corruption they spread. It is hoped that when they have done: *So that perhaps they will return repentant.* (30:41) They might resolve to stop corruption and return to faith and its course of action which sanctions the doing of only what is good.

At the end of this round, the chapter warns them against incurring a punishment similar to what was inflicted on communities before them. They were aware of the ends met by many of those, as they used to see their ruins on their travels: *Say: Journey through the earth; then, look on how had been the Ultimate End of those who were before. Most of them had been ones who are polytheists.* (30:42) Their fates are sufficient to discourage anyone from wanting to follow in their footsteps.

Now we have a reference to the other way whose travellers will never be lost. This leads to a different horizon which never brings disappointment: (30:43-30:45)

Taking up the true faith is expressed here in an inspiring way, suggesting full and serious commitment: (30:43) This implies full attention and clear aspiration. It looks up to a high horizon and a sublime goal. The same sort of directive was given to the Prophet in this chapter when it spoke about groups and sects with divergent beliefs. It is repeated here as the chapter speaks about God's alleged partners, increase in sustenance, corruption resulting from unbelief, what people suffer as a result of the spread of corruption and pollution, and

the fates of those who associate partners with God. Therefore, we have a statement here of the reward expected in the life to come and what both believers and unbelievers then stand to receive. The chapter warns against a day that cannot be averted. On that day, people will be divided into two great groups: *So set your face to the truth-loving way of life before that Day approaches from God and there is no turning back. They will be split up on that Day. Whoever was ungrateful, his ingratitude is on him. Whoever did as one in accord with morality will be arranging provision for themselves.* (30:43-30:44)

The Arabic text uses the word *yamhad* which is given in translation as 'smoothed a way'. In its original meaning, the word means: prepare a place of repose, or a comfortable way to follow, a cradle. All these connotations combine to describe good deeds and their role. A person who does good deeds actually prepares a position of comfort for himself, this at the same time he does such deeds, not later. This is the meaning the sign highlights. *And He gives recompense to those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality from His grace.* (30:45) Whatever anyone receives as a reward comes out of God's bounty. No one deserves heaven on the basis of his or her actions alone. No matter what we do, we do not thank God enough for a part of what He has given us. Yet His grace continues to be bestowed on the believers. As for the ungrateful, He has no love for them: *Truly, He loves not the ones who are ungrateful.* (30:45)

The chapter begins a new round showing some of God's signs and how they reflect His grace as He provides them with sustenance and guidance. They recognize only parts of this, denying others. Nevertheless, they do not give thanks or follow His guidance: (30:46-30:50)

These winds herald rain. From experience, people know the winds that bring rain which raises their hopes. *Among His signs are that He sends the winds as ones that give good tidings and causes you to experience His mercy and so that the boats run at His command and that you be looking for His grace so that perhaps you will give thanks.* with this prospect of rain, fertility and growth. *And so that the boats run at His command* either with the help of rain or by causing rivers to flow and allowing ships to sail on them. Yet the ships are actually run by God's bidding, according to the laws He operates in the universe, giving everything its qualities and functions. An aspect of this is that ships are easily carried by water and they float and move, pushed by the wind, either with or against the current. With Him everything is made to measure. So that you might go about in quest of some of His bounty, on your business travels, in cultivating the land, and in business exchanges. All this is part of

God's bounty, given by the One who has created everything and perfectly proportioned them all so that you might have cause to be grateful, for His grace in all this. This comment at the end of the sign serves as an indication of how people should behave when they receive God's bounty .

Similar to sending the winds bearing good news is the sending of messengers with veritable signs of the truth: *And, certainly, We sent Messengers before you to their own folk. They drew near them with the clear portents.* (30:47) Yet people did not receive this aspect of God's grace, which is much greater and further reaching than the wind that brings the prospect of rain. Nor did they benefit by them as they did by rain, even though their messages were far more beneficial and longer lasting. Essentially, they took two different attitudes towards God's messengers. Some of them refused to believe or reflect on God's messages and continued to inflict harm on the messengers and to turn people away from God's path. Others, who believed, recognized God's signs, offered thanks for His grace, and bore with patience the harm inflicted on them by the other group. Furthermore, they were confident that God's promise would come true. The outcome was in accordance with divine justice and in fulfilment of His certain promise: *Then, We requited those who sinned. And it had been an obligation on Us to help ones who believe.* (30:47)

No one knows the extent of such rejoicing: *God is He Who sends the winds so they raise clouds. He extends them in the heaven how He wills and He makes them into pieces until you have seen rain drops go forth from their midst. That is when He lit it on whomever He wills of His servants. That is when they rejoice at the good tidings.* (30:48) better than the people for whom rain means survival. The Arabs were the first people to realize the importance of this statement, because their lives depended on rain. Their poetry and folk stories mention it with hope and endearment.

This: *And, truly, they had been—even before it is sent down on them—before that, ones who are seized with despair.* (30:49) describes their condition before rain. In fact, rain changes their condition completely, from despair to hope and rejoicing. You see these effects in people's faces as they brighten up after being gloomy with despair, in the quickening earth, and in the liveliness affecting all.

This: *Look on the effects of the mercy of God, how He gives life to the earth after its death!* (30:50) is a fact that needs no more than that we look and reflect. It is given here as evidence confirming the resurrection when people are brought back to life. This is consistent in the Quranic argument where universal images and facts of life are

given as substantial evidence: *Truly, that! He is One Who Gives Life to the dead and He is Powerful over everything.* (30:50) We need only to look at the effects of God's grace on the earth to be certain of the truth of this eventuality and the fulfilment of this promise.

The chapter then describes the feelings of those very people who are happy at seeing the wind carrying water and who rejoice as they see rain bringing God's grace. What would they feel, however, if they saw the winds as yellowish in color carrying dust and sand? Such winds destroy fields and livestock, or cause plants to dry and wither: *And if We sent a wind and they saw fields, ones that are yellowing, they would stay ungrateful after that.* (30:51) Rather than submitting to God's will and praying to Him earnestly to remove their affliction, they deny the truth out of frustration and despair. This is the status of people who do not believe in God or His will, of people who cannot discern God's wisdom in what He decides, and cannot appreciate that it is God's hand that determines everything in the universe, ensuring harmony between all its events and situations.

Thus the chapter describes the fluctuation of people's desires, their inability to benefit by God's signs that they see in the universe around them, and their failure to recognize God's wisdom behind life's events. It then addresses the Prophet consoling him for not being able to persuade many of them to follow divine guidance. It tells him that this is due to their nature and blindness, which he can never cure. (30:52-30:53)

These are the ones who listen to the divine message because they have active minds and hearts, as well as sound understanding. When they listen to the divine message, they realize that it is the truth and they declare their submission to Him. They only need that their nature be alerted, and they respond.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

LEARNING TO THINK QURANICALLY

I tried using writing as a way to learn by writing summaries in my own words of important points from the Quranic signs here.

I was able to formulate test questions.

I wrote out answers to my own questions.
I was able to get in touch with my emotions.
I learned that whenever I feel some negative emotion, I ask myself:
What, exactly, is the thinking leading to this emotion?
For example, if I are angry, ask myself, what is the thinking that is making me angry?
What other ways could I think about this situation?
For example, can I think about the situation so as to see the humor in it and what is pitiable in it?
If I can, concentrate on that thinking and my emotions, I will (eventually) shift to match them.

84(6). Critical Thinking International Standard Connecting Complexities and Interrelationships

To connect complexities and interrelationships is an intellectual standard for critical thinking. This relates to the complexities and interrelationships between and among the Quranic verses. They require you to think beneath the surface of what the section or sign is saying. Exploring the Quranic message in the classroom depends on the quality of commitment of you and your classmates to develop your ability to discern the depth of what you are studying.

Quranic Chapter 30: The Romans (al-Rum) Signs 30:54-30:60

Makkah: *God is He Who created you*
in your weakness.
Again, after that weakness,
He assigned strength; again, after that strength,
He assigned weakness and grayness of hair.
And He creates what He wills.
And He is The Knowing, The Powerful. (30:54)
And on a Day when the Hour is secured for you,
the ones who sin will swear
that they lingered in expectation
not but an hour. Thus, they had been misled. (30:55)
And said those who were given
the knowledge and the belief:
Certainly, you lingered in expectation
by what is prescribed by God
until the Day of the Upraising.
This is the Day of Upraising,
but you had not been knowing. (30:56)
So on that Day will not profit them,
those who did wrong,
their excuses nor will they ask to be favored. (30:57)
And, certainly, We propounded for humanity
in this, the Quran,
every kind of parable.
*But if **you** were to bring about any sign to them,*
certainly, they who were ungrateful would say:
Truly, you are nothing
but ones who deal in falsehood. (30:58)
Thus, God sets a seal on the hearts
of those who know not. (30:59)
*So have **you** patience.*

Truly, the promise of God is True.
And let them not irritate you,
those who are not certain in belief. (30:60)

COMMENTARY°

The chapter then takes us on a new round, but this time it is within ourselves looking at the different stages of our life on earth, before it refers to the next life and the close link between the two: (30:54-57)

No one escapes these stages. They never fail to affect anyone who survives; nor are they ever slow so as to come later than usual. These stages confirm that humanity is subject to a greater will that creates and determines as it pleases. That is the will of God who determines the age, life and stages of every creature in accordance with perfect knowledge and elaborate planning: *God is He Who created you in your weakness. Again, after that weakness, He assigned strength; again, after that strength, He assigned weakness and grayness of hair. And He creates what He wills. And He is The Knowing, The Powerful.* (30:54)

This well-regulated creation must certainly have a well-regulated end. Indeed, this is shown in a scene from the Day of Judgment that is full of movement and dialogue to bring it alive before our eyes: *And on a Day when the Hour is secured for you, the ones who sin will swear that they lingered in expectation not but an hour.* (30:55) Thus, all that has passed before that day shrinks into insignificance so as to make them swear that they had not lived on earth more than one hour. Their oaths may also be taken to mean that they did not stay in their graves for more than an hour, or that this duration of one hour applies to all their time on earth in both their conditions of life and death. *Thus, they had been misled.* (30:55) They could not make a proper estimate of their time, until those who have true knowledge tell them the right duration: *And said those who were given the knowledge and the belief:* (30:56)

Most probably the ones described as 'endowed with knowledge' are the believers who were certain of the coming of the Last Hour, recognizing what lies beyond the apparent aspects of the life of this world. These are the ones who have true knowledge and enlightened faith. In their answer, they refer the matter to God's knowledge: *Certainly, you lingered in expectation by what is prescribed by God until the Day of the Upraising. This is the Day of Upraising, but you had not been knowing.* This is the term appointed, and it does not matter whether it was of a long or short duration. The appointed time was met: (30:56)

The scene is completed with a general statement of the overall result, referring to the fate of the wrongdoers who denied the Day of Judgment: *So on that Day will not profit them, those who did wrong, their excuses nor will they ask to be favored.* (30:57) No justification will be accepted from them. In fact no acknowledgement of error or apology is sought from them. That is the Day of Judgement and punishment of the guilty, not a day of providing justification for wrong action.

The chapter then describes how the ungrateful persist in their ways, after having explained the fate of such persistent unbelief: (30:58-30:59)

There is a wide gap here in time and place, but it sounds in the chapter as if it is ever so near; indeed both time and place have been rolled back. People are again reminded of what the Quran provides by way of illustrations, modes of address, fine touches meant to alert minds and hearts, and inspiring images. They listen to it as it addresses every mind and heart in every social environment and speaks to the human soul in all its moods. Yet they continue to deny every sign. Nor do they stop at this, but rather insult those endowed with true knowledge describing them as making false assertions: *And, certainly, We propounded for humanity in this, the Quran, every kind of parable. But if you were to bring about any sign to them, certainly, they who were ungrateful would say: Truly, you are nothing but ones who deal in falsehood.* (30:58) The chapter comments on their disbelief, saying: *Thus, God sets a seal on the hearts of those who know not.* (30:59) It is in this way and for this reason that God seals their hearts. They are indeed blind, unable to see God's signs, arrogant in their disbelief, unwilling to reflect. Therefore, they deserve that God should seal their sight and their hearts.

The final note in the chapter comes in the form of a directive to the Prophet and the believers: *So have you patience. Truly, the promise of God is True. And let them not irritate you, those who are not certain in belief.* (30:60)

Perseverance is the best policy for the believers as they go along their hard, long way that at times seems endless. They must remain confident of the fulfilment of God's promise. This will enable them to remain steadfast, free of worry and doubt. Other people may hesitate, or deny the truth, or doubt that God's promise will ever be fulfilled, because they have no true knowledge and lack the means of certainty. Believers, however, must persevere, remain steadfast and confident, even though their path may seem endless, and their goal seem concealed behind thick clouds.

Thus the chapter that started with God's promise to grant victory

to the Byzantines within a few years, and give support and victory to the believers, now ends with the directive to persevere until God's promise is fulfilled. Believers are instructed to remain steadfast in the face of all the ungrateful' attempts to weaken their resolve. There is perfect harmony between the opening and the end. As it concludes, the lingering impression is that of a firm resolve and unshaken trust that God's promise will be fulfilled.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

How to Build Your Argument from a few main ideas. State where you are going and what you will prove.

Know your audience: where are they coming from?
Cover mutual ground as a starting point.
Use familiar vocabulary to begin; introduce and define new concepts gradually.
Adapt the presentation's goals with the interests of your audience.
Treat each audience as a unique group.
Convince them with facts and logic.
Demonstrate that you know what you are talking about, but on their level!
Review and summarize in your conclusion.
Summarize what you've told them.
Check for comprehension.
Leave time for questions and discussion.
Follow up with options so audience can contact you.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I thought about the depth of interrelationships as expressed in this sign between God, the Messenger and the believers.

LESSON 85(1). CRITICAL THINKING INTERNATIONAL STANDARD APPROPRIATENESS (TO BE RELEVANT)

Appropriate means bearing upon or relating to the matter at hand, that is understanding the Quranic message. It implies a close logical relationship with, and importance to, what the Quran is revealing. Its relevance and validity of information helps in structuring problems and solving them. The appropriateness of the Quran's message has been clear for over 1400 years as it is the model which the believers follow.

It is not the effort that you put into this Quranic Studies that is evaluated, but the quality of your learning. Quranic appropriateness connects to its teaching you how to think. Once you have assessed the issues, concepts and information relevant to the particular sign or signs, your thinking will be focused on the task, question or problem related from the sign or signs.

The Quranic message conforms to the principles of good reasoning. It is sensible and teaches good judgment through its consistent, logical, complete, relevant and appropriate arguments on issues that are important to human life. Being sensitive with an ability to judge appropriateness is only developed with continuous practice, practice in distinguishing the relevant from the irrelevant, by evaluating what is appropriate and by arguing for and against the appropriateness of facts.

QURANIC CHAPTER 29: THE SPIDER (AL-ANKABUT)
SIGNS 29:1-29:13

Madinah (29:1)
Madinah (29:2)
Madinah (29:3)
Madinah (29:4)
Madinah (29:5)
Madinah (29:6)
Madinah (29:7)
Madinah (29:8)
Madinah (29:9)
Madinah (29:10)
Madinah (29:11)

Makkah: *And those who were ungrateful*
said to those who believed:
Follow our way and we will, certainly,
carry your transgressions
while they are not ones who carry
any of their own transgressions.
Truly, they are the ones who lie. (29:12)
And, certainly, they will carry their own lading

and other ladings with their own ladings.
And, certainly, they will be asked
on the Day of Resurrection about
what they had been devising. (29:13)

COMMENTARY°

From start to finish the chapter strikes several strong notes on the meaning of faith and its nature, shaking people's hearts. In a most serious manner, it puts them face to face with the duties imposed by faith. The choice is either to fulfil these or to abandon them. The alternative is to be a hypocrite, which fact God will certainly unmask. The only way to describe these notes is to refer to the texts in which they occur. We will now discuss them fully at their relevant places in the chapter.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What factors make the interrelationship among believers a difficult problem in terms of being part of a community?
What are some of the complexities of this question?
Is this question simple or complex?
Is it easy or difficult to answer well and truly?
What makes this a complex question?
How are we dealing with the complexities inherent in the question?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to explain the main points of the signs to another student.

Lesson 85(2). Critical Thinking International Standard Worthiness (focussing on the important, not the trivial)

Sufficiently great or import to be worthy of attention.

Quranic Chapter 29: The Spider (al-Ankabut) Signs 29:14-29:22

Makkah: Book 25: Noah (29:14)
Makkah: Book 25: Noah (29:15)
Makkah Book 26: Abraham (29:16)
Makkah Book 26: Abraham (29:17)
Makkah Book 26: Abraham (29:18)
Makkah: *Consider they not how God*
causes the creation to begin
and, again, He causes it to return?
Truly, that for God is easy. (29:19)
Say: Journey through the earth;
then, look on how He began the creation.
Again, God will cause the last growth to grow.
Truly, God is Powerful over everything. (29:20)
He punishes whom He wills
and has mercy on whom He wills.
And to Him you will come back. (29:21)
You will not be ones who frustrate Him
on the earth
nor in the heaven
and there is not for you, other than God,
either a protector or a helper. (29:22)

Commentary°

Thereafter, the chapter takes a brief pause to address all who deny faith, the inevitable return of all humanity to God, and the resurrection and reckoning: (29:19-22)

Moreover, the One who originates life is certainly able to bring people back after death: Nothing is difficult for God, but He gives the argument by human standards. For us, doing something for the second time is easier than the first; but to God both are equally easy. It needs nothing more than for God to will something and say, 'Be', and it happens.

The chapter then calls on people to travel in all directions and contemplate God's work and signs that appear in all creation, animate and inanimate alike. When they do, they will realize that the One

who originates life can bring it back without difficulty: (29:20)

Traveling opens people's hearts to new and unfamiliar vistas. It awakens their senses and minds. By contrast, the place where one lives very often holds no attraction or excitement because of over-familiarity. Yet to return home after a period away often rekindles passion and enthusiasm for what once seemed dull and unremarkable. This, thus, leads to new interaction and appreciation of one's immediate environs. All glory is to God, who has bestowed the Quran from on high and who has full knowledge of how people's hearts and minds function and interact with their surroundings.

In the Arabic text: *Say: Journey through the earth; then, look on how He began the creation. Again, God will cause the last growth to grow. Truly, God is Powerful over everything.* (29:20) the order to travel is followed with a sentence that uses the simple past tense referring to the start of creation. This is significant, for we see today certain things that are indicative of the beginning of life and how the earth came to be populated with different species. Scientific excavations have formed some idea about how life started, spread and progressed, but they have not arrived at anything definite about the secret of life. They do not know how it came to be on earth, nor when the first living creature was placed on it. The order given by God, then, is to search for the beginning of life and to use acquired knowledge to learn about resurrection and the life to come.

He initiates life and brings it back. *Say: Journey through the earth; then, look on how He began the creation. Again, God will cause the last growth to grow. Truly, God is Powerful over everything.* (29:20) He is not restricted by what people imagine to be feasible or unfeasible, possible or impossible.

Part of God's power over all things is that He punishes whomever He wills and bestows His grace upon whomever He wills. To Him all humanity return; none escapes Him and none can evade His will: (29:21-29:22)

Punishment and mercy are subject to God's will in the sense that He has given clear guidance and made the way of error clear for all. He has given man the propensity to follow either. The choice belongs entirely to man. However, when man chooses to believe in God and shows a willingness to follow His guidance, God will help him as He has committed Himself to do so. On the other hand, when he turns away from divine guidance he becomes isolated and lives in error. The two ways then lead to either God's mercy in the first case or to His punishment in the latter.

In this instance: *He punishes whom He wills and has mercy on whom He wills. And to Him you will come back.* (29:21), the chapter

uses the word *tuqlabun*, which carries connotations of violent return, to suit what follows: *You will not be ones who frustrate Him on the earth nor in the heaven and there is not for you, other than God, either a protector or a helper.* (29:22) You have no power to save yourselves from a return to God. Neither your own power that you have on earth nor that of those whom you sometimes worship, such as the angels or jinn, thinking that they have power in the skies, have any effect: *You will not be ones who frustrate Him on the earth nor in the heaven and there is not for you, other than God, either a protector or a helper.* (29:22) How can there be any protection or support against God? Who could give it: man, angel, or jinn? They are all God's creatures and servants. They cannot cause benefit or harm even to themselves, let alone anyone else.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Stage 1

- Develop a statement of the topic
- List what you understand, what you've been told and what opinions you hold about it
- Identify resources available for research
- Define timelines and due dates and how they affect the development of your study
- Print the list as your reference

Stage 2

- Define your destination, what you want to learn
- Clarify or verify with your teacher or an "expert" on your subject
- Develop your frame of reference, your starting point, by listing what you already know about the subject

What opinions and prejudices do you already have about this?
What have you been told, or read about, this topic?
What resources are available to you for research

When gathering information, keep an open mind
Look for chance resources that pop up!

Play the "reporter" and follow leads
If you don't seem to find what you need, ask librarians or your teacher.
How does your timeline and due dates affect your research?

Stage 3
Keep in mind that you need to follow a schedule.
- Work back from the due date and define stages of development, not just with this first phase, but in completing the whole project.

Summary of Critical Thinking:
1. Determine the facts of a new situation or subject without prejudice
2. Place these facts and information in a pattern so that you can understand them
3. Accept or reject the source values and conclusions based upon your experience, judgment, and beliefs

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I am frequently able to explain these signs to someone.
I know that if I cannot explain these sign to someone else, it shows that I have not learned them well enough.

LESSON 85(3). CRITICAL THINKING INTERNATIONAL STANDARD NUMEROUS OR MULTIPLE VIEWPOINTS

Observation and information are the basis for sound conclusions. You learn to distinguish between what you observe from the Quranic signs and what you conclude. You delve into the facts given in the signs to find the implications as well as the concepts. You separate guessing from clear conclusions. You normally have a tendency to make inferences that reinforce your own egocentric or sociocentric world views. You learn to evaluate inferences that are made when your own desires are involved from inferences that develop sound conclusions. You should know that every interpretation that is made is based on inference and that you interpret every situation in which you find yourselves.

The Middle Community, Moderation (*ummatan wasatan, wasatiyyah*): The Quranic conception of the Middle Community visualizes a certain degree of parity between dialogic and co-related concepts such as reason and revelation, matter and spirit, rights and duties, individualism and society, compulsion and voluntarism, text and *ijtihad*, ideal and reality, continuity and change, and between the past realities and future prospects. How does *wasatiyyah* manifest itself and achieve its desire purposes of equilibrium and moderation?

QURANIC CHAPTER 29: THE SPIDER (AL-ANKABUT) SIGNS 29:23-29:30

Makkah: *And those who disbelieved*
in the signs of God
and the meeting with Him,
those gave up hope of My mercy
and those, for them there will be a painful punishment. (29:23)
Makkah Book 26: Abraham, Lot (29:24)
Makkah Book 26: Abraham, Lot (29:25)
Makkah Book 26: Abraham, Lot (29:26)
Makkah Book 26: Abraham, Lot (29:27)
Makkah Book 26: Abraham, Lot (29:28)
Makkah Book 26: Abraham, Lot (29:29)
Makkah Book 26: Abraham, Lot (29:30)

COMMENTARY°

The human being does not despair of God's mercy except when he totally disbelieves, severing all relations with his Lord. Again we are not ungrateful except when we despair of establishing a relation between ourselves and God, abandoning all hope of God's grace. The end then is well known. (29:23)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What facts are relevant to this issue?
What facts must we consider in deciding this issue?
What information do we need?
Do you mean that your classmate is assuming that ...?
The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are ... ?
Figure out all significant ideas needed to understand and answer your question.
You may need to analyze these concepts. Use a good dictionary.
My inferences or conclusions are based on Quranic concepts and theories.
What is the most basic concept in my question?
What Quranic terms have I learned?
What are the key concepts (definitions) of the Quranic message in this section?
What ideas or principles does the Quranic message clarify?
What theories does the Quranic message present?
Is this idea causing problems for me or for others?
I think this is a good theory, but could you explain it more fully?
What is the main hypothesis you are using in your reasoning?
Are you using this term in keeping with established usage?
What idea is this author using in his or her thinking?
Is there a problem with it?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I know that I cannot interpret information without ideas or concepts, or some way to give meaning.
I am able to find the key idea, the central concept of the signs.
I know the subject of the concept and its vocabulary.

LESSON 85(4). CRITICAL THINKING INTERNATIONAL STANDARD RIGHT JUDGMENT

The condition or quality of being true, correct, or exact; freedom from error or defect; precision or exactness; correctness; faithful representation of the truth.

QURANIC CHAPTER 29: THE SPIDER (AL-ANKABUT) SIGNS 29:31-29:44

Makkah Book 26: Abraham, Lot (29:31)
Makkah Book 26: Abraham, Lot (29:32)
Makkah Book 26: Abraham, Lot (29:33)
Makkah Book 26: Abraham, Lot (29:34)
Makkah Book 26: Abraham, Lot (29:35)
Makkah Book 27: Shuayb (Jethro)
and the People of Midian (29:36)
Makkah Book 27: Shuayb (Jethro)
and the People of Midian (29:37)
Makkah Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad,
Salih and the People of Thamud (29:38)
Makkah Book 27: Moses, Korah, Haman (29:39)
Makkah Book 27: Shuayb (Jethro) and the People of Midian;
Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad,
Salih and the People of Thamud (29:40)
Makkah: *The parable of those*
who took other than God to themselves
as protectors
is that of the spider who took a house to itself.
But, truly, the frailest of houses
is the house of the spider
if they had but been knowing. (29:41)
Truly, God knows what thing
they call to other than Him.
And He is The Almighty, The Wise. (29:42)
And We propound these parables for humanity.
And no one is reasonable among them
but the ones who know. (29:43)
God created the heavens
and the earth with The Truth.
Truly, in that is a sign
for the ones who believe. (29:44)

COMMENTARY°

All power belongs to God. The only protection to be sought is from God. Everything else is weak, flimsy and powerless, however much it tries to inflict punishment, be tyrannical and overpowering. They are simply spiders, and what power has a spider other than the silk with which it weaves its web? (29:41)

Advocates of the divine message who are often subjected to oppression and hardship, and also to temptation and deceit, should reflect on this great truth and keep it before their eyes. They must not allow themselves to forget this even for a moment as they face different forces, some trying to inflict harm on them or even crush them, and some trying to lure them to their own line, or to buy them out. But all these forces are no more than the threads of a spider's web. This is their real estimation in God's measure. It is also the measure when compared with true faith when people have the right concept of it.

They seek the protection of patrons to whom they ascribe a share of divinity. God knows the reality of these patrons: they are no more than a spider seeking refuge in its frail web. *Truly, God knows what thing they call to other than Him. And He is The Almighty, The Wise.* (29:42) He alone has power over all things, and in His wisdom, He conducts the affairs of the universe.

Devoid of knowledge and clear reasoning, some ungrateful took such comparisons as material for ridicule. They said that Muhammad's God speaks about spiders and flies. They were uninspired by this remarkable description because they did not use their reason, while their knowledge too remained scanty: *And We propound these parables for humanity. And no one is reasonable among them but the ones who know.* (29:43)

This great truth, stated in full clarity, is then linked to the main truth apparent in the design of the universe. This follows the Quranic method of linking all facts to that main truth: *God created the heavens and the earth with The Truth. Truly, in that is a sign for the ones who believe.* (29:44) In perfect harmony with the rest of the chapter, this sign enhances the real link between different realities and the main truth that lies behind the creation of the heavens and the earth. It is this truth that maintains the universe according to a fine and accurate system which never fails or allows inner conflict.

These are the believers whose hearts respond to the signs God has placed in all aspects of creation. These are clearly seen in the harmony apparent in the universe. All is part of a consistent system despite its seeming diversity. It is only believers who perceive these signs and appreciate them, because their eyes and hearts remain open.

At the end of this passage, the chapter links the book revealed to Muhammad, his advocacy of the divine message, prayers and remembrance of God with the truth reflected in the heavens and the earth, and with the advocacy of the divine message ever since Noah's time.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

WHAT IS PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING?

Your teacher presents you with a problem, not lectures or assignments or exercises. Since you are not handed "content", your learning becomes active in the sense that you discover and work with content that you determine to be necessary to solve the problem. Your teacher acts as facilitator and mentor, rather than a source of "solutions".

Problem based learning will provide you with opportunities to:

* examine and try out what you know
* discover what you need to learn
* develop your people skills for achieving higher performance in teams
* improve your communications skills
* state and defend positions with evidence and sound argument
* become more flexible in processing information and meeting obligations
* practice skills that you will need after your education

WRITE A PROBLEM STATEMENT

A problem statement should come from your/the group's analysis of what you know, and what you will need to know to solve it. You will need: a written statement; the agreement of your group on the statement; feedback on this statement from your instructor. (This may be optional, but is a good idea)

Lesson 85(5). Critical Thinking International Standard Clarity (understandable, to be clear)

The word "clarity" or "to be clear (*bayan*)" occurs over two hundred times in the Quran. The Quranic message describes itself as having clarity or being clear, having clear signs, making things clear. The clarity in the Quranic message is to guide us to the distinction between truth and error. Clarity means to be understandable such that the meaning can be grasped; to be free from confusion or ambiguity, to remove obscurities. Clarity is essential as an opening or beginning or gateway standard because if a statement is unclear, it cannot determined if it is accurate or relevant. In fact, nothing can be determined about it because students may not as yet know what it means. They can only assume that we understand a thought when we can elaborate on it, illustrate it and give an example of it.

Quranic Chapter 29: The Spider (al-Ankabut) Signs 29:45-29:51

Makkah: *Recount what was revealed to **you***
of the Book
and perform the formal prayer.
Truly, the formal prayer prohibits depravity
and that which is unlawful, and, truly,
the remembrance of God is greater.
And God knows what you craft. (29:45)
And dispute not with the People of the Book
unless in a way that is fairer,
but with those who did wrong among them.
And say: We have believed
in what was caused to descend to us
and was caused to descend to you and our God
and your God is One
and we are ones who submit to Him. (29:46)
*And, thus, We caused the Book to descend to **you.***
And those to whom We gave the Book
before will believe in it.
And of these, the people of Makkah,
there are some who believe in it.
And none negates Our signs
but the ones who are ungrateful. (29:47)
*And neither had **you** been recounting*
from any Book before it
*nor write **you** it with **your** right hand for then,*
certainly, they would have been in doubt,

the ones who deal in falsehood. (29:48)
Nay! It is clear portents, signs in the breasts
of those who were given the knowledge.
And none negate Our signs
but ones who are unjust. (29:49)
And they said: Why were signs not caused to descend
to him from his Lord?
Say: The signs are only with God.
I am only a warner,
one who makes clear. (29:50)
Suffices for them not that
We caused the Book to descend to thee
which is recounted to them?
Truly, in that is a mercy and a reminder
for a folk who believe. (29:51)

COMMENTARY°

This section begins with an instruction to the Prophet and the believers to recite the book that was revealed to him. *Recount what was revealed to* ***you*** *of the Book and perform the formal prayer. Truly, the formal prayer prohibits depravity and that which is unlawful, and, truly, the remembrance of God is greater. And God knows what you craft.* (29:45) They were further instructed to attend regularly to prayer as a method of God's remembrance and to watch God who knows all that they do.

Muslims are instructed not to argue with the people of earlier revelations except in accordance with what is best: which means explaining the purpose behind the new message and outlining the links between it and all earlier divine messages. It also stresses the importance of accepting the final form of the divine message which is in full agreement with all previous messages, complementing them in accordance with God's knowledge of what suits people and their needs. There is, however, one exception to be singled out those of them who are intent on wrongdoing. *And dispute not with the People of the Book unless in a way that is fairer, but with those who did wrong among them. And say: We have believed in what was caused to descend to us and was caused to descend to you and our God and your God is One and we are ones who submit to Him.* (29:46) These have deviated from the basic belief in God's Oneness, associated partners with Him and violated the principles of His way of life. With these no argument is of use. Indeed, there is no need to maintain the same code with them. These are the ones the Quranic message fought when it established its state in Madinah.

There is no need for conflict, argument or dispute, as they all believe in one God, and Muslims believe in what was revealed to the prophets before them. It is all essentially the same. Indeed, the divine way of life follows a smooth way of progress. *And, thus, We caused the Book to descend to you.* (29:47)

This sign begins with 'thus', indicating that the revelation of the Quran to the Prophet Muhammad followed the same rule and method of revelation to earlier prophets and messengers. *And those to whom We gave the Book before will believe in it.* (29:47) In their attitude towards it, people divided into two groups: the first, composed of some of those who followed earlier revelations and some Arabs of the Quraysh, accepted it as true and believed in it; the second rejected it despite the testimony given by people of earlier divine religions that it was true and confirmed their own revelations: *And of these, the people of Makkah, there are some who believe in it. And none negates Our signs but the ones who are ungrateful.* (29:47) These new revelations are so clear and straightforward that they will not be denied except by those who deliberately shut their minds and spirits to them, refusing to reflect on them. The Arabic word kufr and its derivative kafirun, which respectively mean 'unbelief' and 'unbelievers', denote in their original linguistic 'cover, screen, etc.' Therefore, the use of the word ungrateful in this instance stresses such connotations. *And neither had you been recounting from any Book before it nor write you it with your right hand for then, certainly, they would have been in doubt, the ones who deal in falsehood.* (29:48)

Thus the Quran replies to even their most naive of queries. The Prophet had lived among them all his life and could neither read nor write. Then, he gave them this remarkable book, which was unlike anything produced by even the most talented of literary figures. They might have had a reasonable suspicion, had the Prophet been a man of literary talent. What doubt though could they reasonably entertain when they were fully aware of his past among them? Furthermore, even if the Prophet could read and write they should not have entertained any doubt about it. The Quran is its own best witness that it has no human author. It is far greater than man's ability, knowledge and world. Whenever one reflects on its statements one cannot escape the feelings that it is too powerful and too authoritative to be of human composition. *Nay! It is clear portents, signs in the breasts of those who were given the knowledge.* (29:49)

It gives clear unambiguous indications to those who have been granted sound knowledge, leaving no room for doubt or suspicion. They feel these signs within their own hearts and they are thus reas-

sured. They do not require any further proof. Knowledge that deserves to be described as true is that which is felt to be certain at heart, illuminating a person's way and leading him to what is best. *And none negate Our signs but ones who are unjust.* (29:49) These are the ones who are unfair in their evaluation of things and who stray a long way from the truth and the right path. *And they said: Why were signs not caused to descend to him from his Lord?* (29:50)

What they want are miracles like those which earlier messengers were given when humanity was still in its infancy. These serve as final evidence only to the generation and community which sees them. This final message, however, provides such evidence to everyone who receives its call until the end of human life. Therefore, its miracle is given in the form of signs of the Quran, a miraculous book which is full of wonders. It opens its treasures to all generations. It is made up of signs that are clear to the hearts of those gifted with real knowledge. As they reflect on its signs they realize that they are in fact miraculous signs and they recognize the source from which they derive their power.

He produces them when there is need according to His own plans. It is not for the Prophet or anyone else to make suggestions to God concerning the provision of any sign. The Prophet tells them this, explaining that it is alien to his manners and nature that he should make such a suggestion. *Say: The signs are only with God. I am only a warner, one who makes clear.* (29:50) I explain things, deliver my message and warn people. When I have done that, the task assigned to me has been fulfilled. It is up to God to decide what to do next. Thus the faith is presented purely, free of any confusion and suspicion. The limits of God's Messenger's task are defined so that people do not become confused with God's attributes. No ambiguity is allowed to blur his message. Such ambiguity occurred with earlier messages when the miracles shown to people became confused with myth and legend, leading to deviation from the path of truth.

Those people who demand physical miracles do not truly appreciate the great favor God has granted them with the Quran. He bestowed this from on high so as to guide them: *Suffices for them not that We caused the Book to descend to you which is recounted to them? Truly, in that is a mercy and a reminder for a folk who believe.* (29:51)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts**

(vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

THINKING ALOUD

Think aloud about the problem we are faced with in these Quranic signs. Engage in thinking aloud to yourself. What is known as private speech never disappears. Whenever we encounter unfamiliar or demanding activities in our lives, private speech resurfaces. It is a tool that helps us overcome obstacles and acquire new skills.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

When I focused on clarity, I began to notice when I was being unclear in communicating with others.

When I was reading, I began to notice when I was clear about what I was reading.

I focused on the four techniques of clarification:

1. Stating what I am saying explicitly and precisely (with careful consideration given to my choice of words);
2. Elaborating on my meaning in other words;
3. Giving examples of what I mean from experiences I have had;
4. Using analogies, metaphors, pictures, or diagrams to illustrate what I meant.

In other words, I frequently stated, elaborated, illustrated and exemplified my points.

LESSON 85(6). CRITICAL THINKING INTERNATIONAL STANDARD FAIRNESS (RIGHT-MINDED)

Having fairness is described as in the Quran as having wisdom (*hikmah*). It is considered to be the ability to form judgments that are free from discrimination or dishonesty. Having wisdom in the Quranic sense is to have experience, knowledge and good or right judgment. Out of these develops a sense of impartiality so that we learn to weigh two differing points of view equally.

Developing a sense of fairness is the ability to make judgments free from discrimination or dishonesty. Having wisdom is to have experience, knowledge and good judgment. From this fair-mindedness or wisdom comes a sense of impartiality, that is, an inclination to weigh two views or opinions equally.

Using a sense of fairness when weighing two views or opinions helps us overcome any lingering egocentricity. We may have thought that we knew the truth only to find that we were wrong. We also learn not to judge any ideas until we are familiar with them and we have fully understood them.

Thinking critically, we are able to consider both the strengths and the weaknesses of differing points of view. We learn to put ourselves in place of others in order to understand them and what they are saying. We learn to overcome our self-centered point of view of identifying truth with our immediate perceptions or long-held beliefs. We gain the ability to accurately state the viewpoints and reasoning of others. We reason from premises, assumptions and ideas that are not our own. We can recall times when we were wrong but convinced that we were right. We begin to realize that our behavior and judgments affect others so that we learn to see things from another's point of view.

QURANIC CHAPTER 29: THE SPIDER (AL-ANKABUT) SIGNS 29:52-29:63

Makkah: *Say: God sufficed as a witness*
between me and between you.
He knows whatever is in the heavens and the earth.
And those who believed in falsehood
and were ungrateful to God,
those, they are the ones who are losers. (29:52)
And they seek you to hasten the punishment!
And were it not for a term, that which is determined,
the punishment would have drawn near them.
And, certainly, it will approach them suddenly
while they are not aware. (29:53)
They seek to hasten the punishment and, truly,
hell will be that which encloses
the ones who are ungrateful. (29:54)
On a Day when the punishment

overcomes them from above them
and from beneath their feet,
He will say: Experience
what you had been doing! (29:55)
O my servants who have believed, My earth,
truly, is that which is extensive,
so worship Me! (29:56)
Every soul is one that experiences death.
Again, to Us you will return. (29:57)
And those who believed
and did as the ones in accord with morality,
We will certainly place them in a settlement
in the highest chambers in the Garden,
beneath which rivers run,
ones who will dwell in it forever.
How excellent is the compensation
for the ones who work, (29:58)
those who endured patiently
and they put their trust in their Lord. (29:59)
And how many a moving creature
carries not its own provision,
but God provides for it and for you.
And He is The Hearing, The Knowing. (29:60)
*And if **you** asked them:*
Who created the heavens and the earth
and caused the sun and the moon
to be subservient?
They will, certainly, say.
God. Then, how they are mislead! (29:61)
God extends the provision
for whom He wills of His servants
and confines it for whom He wills.
Truly, God is Knowing of everything. (29:62)
*And if **you** asked them:*
Who sent down water from heaven
and gave life by it to the earth after its death,
certainly, they would say: God!
Say: The Praise belongs to God!
Nay! Most of them are not reasonable. (29:63)

COMMENTARY°

Those who do not feel any of this are the ones who demand a physical miracle so that they can accept this Quran as true. These are

blind people whose hearts do not open up to light. There is no use trying to argue with such people. Therefore, the Prophet is instructed to leave a decision about them to God Almighty: (29:52)

A witness who knows all that takes place in the heavens and earth gives the best and greatest testimony. It is He who knows that their situation is false: *Say: God sufficed as a witness between me and between you. He knows whatever is in the heavens and the earth. And those who believed in falsehood and were ungrateful to God, those, they are the ones who are losers.* (29:52) They are the absolute losers; they are the ones who forego everything. They lose both this world and the life to come, as also themselves, divine guidance, God-consciousness, reassurance, truth and light.

To believe in God is, in itself a great gain, and to be rewarded for it is by God's grace. Belief provides reassurance and a steady footing along the way, steadfastness in the face of adversity, trust in God's help and protection, and confidence as to the eventual outcome. This is indeed a great gain, and it is what the ungrateful lose.

The chapter continues its discussion of what the ungrateful do. It refers to their precipitation of God's punishment, when hell draws close to them: (29:53-29:55)

The ungrateful heard the warnings but could not understand God's wisdom in allowing them time to consider their positions. Therefore, they challenged the Prophet to hasten their punishment. God often allows people time so that the wrongdoers continue their wicked and arrogant ways. He also tests the believers so that they grow stronger in faith and perseverance. Moreover, those who cannot remain steadfast when exposed to a test abandon the believers' ranks. He also allows them time so that those of them whom He knows to have goodness in their hearts recognize the truth, mend their ways and accept His guidance; or else, their own offspring may grow up as believers worshipping Him alone even though their fathers were errant and misguided. Or He may leave them a while for some other purpose of His.

The Arab idolaters, however, could not understand God's purpose and wise planning. Therefore, their challenge hastening their own punishment: *And they seek you to hasten the punishment! And were it not for a term, that which is determined, the punishment would have drawn near them.* (29:53) At this point God threatens them with the punishment which will come upon them, at its set time, but when they least expect it. Thus, it will take them by surprise and they will not be able to escape it: *And, certainly, it will approach them suddenly while they are not aware.* (29:53)

The warning of sudden punishment in this life which occurs

when least expected is followed by another censure for their continued hastening of punishment: *They seek to hasten the punishment and, truly, hell will be that which encloses the ones who are ungrateful.* (29:54) Following the Quranic method of presenting the future as though it is taking place now, the chapter describes hell as encompassing the ungrateful. To them, this is hidden behind the curtains of the future, but to God, it is a visible reality. Describing its hidden reality fills one with awe and makes their hastening of punishment increasingly singular. How could anyone hasten his own punishment when hell engulfs him while he remains heedless, deluded.

The chapter then draws an image of them as they are engulfed by hell, yet hastening their punishment: "On the day when suffering will overwhelm them from above and from beneath their feet. *On a Day when the punishment overcomes them from above them and from beneath their feet. . .* (29:55)

This is a fearful scene, coupled with a humiliating rebuke and painful censure: *He will say: Experience what you had been doing!* (29:55). Such is the end of paying no heed to the warnings and of hastening the punishment.

The chapter leaves careless ungrateful in this scene of suffering, one which engulfs them from above and from under their feet. It moves on to address the believers who suffer persecution at the hands of the ungrateful, who aim to prevent them from worshipping God. It tells them to try to flee from persecution so that they can truly practise their faith. This is given in the form of a loving address that touches one's heart: (29:56-29:60)

The Creator of these hearts who knows all their feelings, fleeting thoughts, perceptions and ideas addresses them with love, inviting them to emigrate for the sake of their faith: These words, right from the outset give them a feeling of their true status, linking them to their Lord: Servants of Mine!'

This is the first caring touch, while the second is felt in what comes next: You are My servants, and this is My earth, which is spacious and can comfortably accommodate you. What keeps you, then, in a hostile place where you are oppressed and persecuted on account of your faith, and where you cannot worship God in freedom? Leave this narrow and restricted place and find somewhere else in My spacious earth, to enjoy freedom of worship: *On a Day when the punishment overcomes them from above them and from beneath their feet, He will say: Experience what you had been doing! O my servants who have believed, My earth, truly, is that which is extensive, so worship Me!* (29:56)

Sorrow at leaving one's own homeland is the first feeling which

stirs in the mind of one who is invited to leave his home. Therefore, these words stress closeness to God and the earth's spaciousness. Since it is all God's earth, then the place to be loved most is that where one enjoys freedom to worship God alone.

The chapter continues to address people's thoughts, and hence how we know the fear involved in emigration. The early Muslims in Makkah felt that they ran the risk of death if they tried to leave. The ungrateful were not averse to stopping them from emigrating because they felt that such emigration represented a threat to their own security. There were also the dangers that they could encounter on the way, should they even manage to leave Makkah. Therefore, the next sign addresses such concerns: *Every soul is one that experiences death. Again, to Us you will return.* (29:57)

God does not, however, leave it at that. He tells them about what He has prepared for them in their future abode. If they leave their own homeland, there are other places on earth that will welcome them; and if they desert their homes, they will be compensated with much better dwellings in heaven: *And those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality, We will certainly place them in a settlement in the highest chambers in the Garden, beneath which rivers run, ones who will dwell in it forever. How excellent is the compensation for the ones who work.* (29:58) At this point God urges them to do what is good, remain patient in all situations and place their trust in Him: (29:58-29:59) This should give them all the encouragement to remain steadfast when worry and fear are keenly felt and encouragement is badly needed.

When people are forced to leave their homeland another worry they entertain is that of livelihood. After all they are abandoning their homes and property, where they are familiar with what is needed and with the available opportunities. Therefore, the chapter also reassures them on this count: *And how many a moving creature carries not its own provision, but God provides for it and for you. And He is The Hearing, The Knowing.* (29:60) It places before their eyes the realities they see around them. Countless are the living creatures that do not know how to gather, carry, care for their sustenance or know what they need for their own survival. They do not know how to provide or store it. Nevertheless, God provides for them all, preserving them from death by starvation. He provides for people in the same way. They may think that they produce their means of sustenance, but the fact is that God grants them the ways and means to obtain what they need for their living, and this, in itself, is a favor given to them by God. They could not have obtained such ways and means without God's grace. Therefore, they should not worry about their sustenance

when they emigrate. They are God's servants, travelling on God's earth, and God will provide for them wherever they are, just as He provides for every living creature.

These caring touches conclude by emphasizing the bond with God. This so that believers are fully aware of the care He takes of them. He listens to them, knows their situation and does not abandon them: *And how many a moving creature carries not its own provision, but God provides for it and for you. And He is The Hearing, The Knowing.* (29:60) Thus ends this short round which delivers caring touches to every heart and responds to every thought, replacing every sort of worry, fear and weariness with reassurance, confidence and comfort. Believers now feel that they will never be abandoned by God, the Most Merciful. Only the Creator understands the worries that overwhelm people's minds, and none cures their hearts except the One who knows all that hearts contain.

Whenever they were asked about the Creator of the heavens and the earth, who controlled the sun and the moon, and brought rain to give life to the earth, they acknowledged that it was all done by God. Yet at the same time, they worshipped their idols, or jinn, or the angels, making these God's partners in the worship they offered, even though such beings had no share in creation. God highlights such ridiculous contradictions as follows: *And if you had asked them: Who created the heavens and the earth and caused the sun and the moon to be subservient? They will, certainly, say: God. Then, how they are mislead!* (29:61) How can they turn a blind eye to the truth and accept instead this muddled concept? *Say: The Praise belongs to God! Nay! Most of them are not reasonable.* (29:63) Certainly anyone who accepts such contradictions has no reason.

In between these questions about the great universal phenomena, the chapter states that God gives provisions in plenty or in small measure to whomever He wills of His servants. Thus, it links the provision of sustenance with the creation of the universe and all other aspects of God's limitless power. It is all done in accordance with God's knowledge: *God extends the provision for whom He wills of His servants and confines it for whom He wills. Truly, God is Knowing of everything.* (29:62)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

HOW DOES OPEN-MINDED CRITICAL THINKING HELP?

- Refine/revise the topic either narrowing or broadening it according to outcomes of research.
- Rank or indicate the importance of three sources of research.
- Clarify any opinion, prejudice, or bias their authors have.
- While an opinion is a belief or attitude toward someone or some thing, a prejudice is preconceived opinion without basis of fact while bias is an opinion based on fact or research.
- Identify key words and concepts that seem to repeat. Is there vocabulary you need to define?
- Are there concepts you need to understand better?
- In reviewing your research, are there
  - Sequences or patterns that emerge?
  - Opposing points of view, contradictions, or facts that don't "fit?"
- Summarize two points of view that you need to address.
- What questions remain to be answered?

Summary of critical thinking:

- Determine the facts of a new situation or subject without prejudice
- Place these facts and information in a pattern so that you can understand and explain them
- Accept or reject your resource values and conclusions based upon your experience, judgment, and beliefs

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I tested myself before I went to class by trying to summarize, orally or in writing, the main points of the previous class meeting because I realize if I cannot summarize main points, I haven't learned them.

I learned to test my thinking using intellectual standards: Being clear, accurate, relevant, precise, reasonable.

LESSON 85(7). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY EMBODY A POINT OF VIEW, FRAME OF REFERENCE, PERSPECTIVE

Human thought is relational and selective. It is impossible to understand any person, event, or phenomenon from every vantage point simultaneously. Our purposes often control how we see things. Critical thinking requires that this fact be taken into account when analyzing and assessing thinking.

HOW IS POINT OF VIEW (FRAME OF REFERENCE, PERSPECTIVE) DEFINED?

The point of view for this course on Quranic Studies is that of the Quran. All the words in the Quran are the Words of God as revealed to Prophet Muhammad. The Prophet related whatever was revealed to him through the Angel Gabriel (*ruh al-qudus*) with God's permission.

The Quranic point of view gives guidance to humanity through the prophetic mission, to bring people from the darkness of ignorance into the light of knowledge and wisdom. As 14:1 says: *This is a Book We caused to descend to you so that you have brought humanity out from the darkness into the light with the permission of their Lord to the path of The Almighty, The Worthy of Praise.* (14:1)

In the Quranic revelation, darkness is not just an individual's state of ignorance, but includes his worship of material gain in place of worshipping God, egoism, being a slave to his desires and being greedy, among other things.

On the level of society, darkness refers to injustice, oppression and/or dis crimination and persecution as the sign to Moses (14:5) says: *Certainly, We sent Moses with Our signs saying: Bring out your folk from the shadows into the light and remind them of the Days of God. Truly, in that are signs for every enduring, grateful one.* (14:5)

The darkness here refers to the oppression and injustice of Pharaoh while the light is that of justice and freedom. The Quranic signs that refer to darkness or shadow and light always refer to darkness or shadow in the plural, while light is in the singular referring to the path of God-consciousness (*taqwa*).

QURANIC CHAPTER 29: THE SPIDER (AL-ANKABUT) SIGNS 29:64-29:69

Makkah: *And this present life is not,*
but a diversion and a pastime.
And, truly, the Last Abode is the eternal life
if they had been knowing! (29:64)
And when they embarked on the boats,
they called to God,
ones who are sincere and devoted

in the way of life to Him.
Then, when He delivered them to dry land,
that is when they ascribed partners with God, (29:65)
being ungrateful for what We gave them.
So let them take joy for soon they will know! (29:66)
Consider they not that We made a safe,
holy place while humanity is being snatched away
all around them?
Believe they, then, in falsehood
and are they ungrateful for the divine blessing? (29:67)
And who does greater wrong
than he who devised a lie against God?
Or denied The Truth when it drew near him?
Is there not in hell a place of lodging
for the ones who are ungrateful? (29:68)
And as for those who struggled for Us,
We will truly guide them to Our ways.
And, truly, God is with ones
who are doers of good. (29:69)

COMMENTARY°

Against this backdrop of life on earth and our means of sustenance, whether plentiful or stinted, an accurate standard is provided against which to measure all values. Thus, we see that this world, with all that it provides of sustenance, comfort and pleasure, is trivial when compared with the life to come: *And this present life is not, but a diversion and a pastime. And, truly, the Last Abode is the eternal life if they had been knowing!* (29:64) When it is not viewed as a means to ensure happiness in the life to come, but felt to be, of itself, the ultimate objective and its pleasures coveted, this present life, with all that it can give, is no more than trifling play. It is the life to come that is the one that is full of life and fulfilment.

The chapter continues its outline of the ungrateful' contradictions: *And when they embarked on the boats, they called to God, ones who are sincere and devoted in the way of life to Him.* (29:65) When they are on board a ship, moving across the sea, feeling their boat to be little more than a toy pushed about by the waves, they remember none other than God. It is to Him alone that they turn for support, and only in His power do they feel that their safety can be guaranteed. Thus, their feelings and speech confirm His Oneness. They recognize this as coming from the depths of their nature. *Then, when He delivered them to dry land, that is when they ascribed partners with God.* (29:65) They forget their nature, and their prayers, reverting to their

association of partners with God.

Such deviation means they are ungrateful for the blessings God grants them, and that they ignore the upright nature and clear proofs He has given them. They will, then, enjoy their worldly life for the limited duration of their time on earth, taking little heed of the inevitable result: *Being ungrateful for what We gave them. So let them take joy for soon they will know!* (29:66) This is a subtle warning that what they will come to know will certainly not please them.

The chapter then reminds them of God's favor. It is He who has placed them close to a secure sanctuary where they live in complete security. Yet they neither remember such blessing, nor offer thanks for it by worshipping God alone. On the contrary, they try to scare the believers who live close to it: (29:67)

Those living in the vicinity of the Kabah enjoyed a life of security: they were honored by other people for the sake of God's House. All around them, Arabian tribes continuously feuded with each other, creating an atmosphere of fear. They only felt secure when they were in the vicinity of the Sacred House. It was amazing, therefore, that they made that very House a place where they put their idols and worshipped other beings. Therefore, the rhetorical question: *Consider they not that We made a safe, holy place while humanity is being snatched away all around them? Believe they, then, in falsehood and are they ungrateful for the divine blessing?*(29:67)

They certainly invented lies against God, attributing partners t Him. They also denied the truth they were given, describing it as lies. Therefore, hell is the right abode for such ungrateful. *And who does greater wrong than he who devised a lie against God? Or denied The Truth when it drew near him? Is there not in hell a place of lodging for the ones who are ungrateful?* (29:68)

The chapter concludes with an image of the other party who strive hard so that they earn God's pleasure and establish a relation with Him. They endure whatever hardship they are called upon to endure, allowing no feelings of despair to creep into their minds. They withstand every hardship and pass every test, fulfilling their duties and marching along the long, hard road to their well-defined goal. Such people will not be left alone. God will never suffer their belief and struggle to be wasted. He looks at them from on high, and He is pleased with them. He will then provide them with guidance, helping them along the road, and give them ample reward for their perseverance and good works: *And as for those who struggled for Us, We will truly guide them to Our ways. And, truly, God is with ones who are doers of good.* (29:69)

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions,** (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What do you believe? How do you see things?
What reasons seem most persuasive to them?
What theory do you think best explains what their teachers are trying to explain?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

Remember what you said about these people before we studied them?
Which of our original beliefs were false or misleading?
Why did we think that way? Where did we get these ideas?
How do people come to think they know what other people are like before they know anything about them?
What false beliefs might other people have about us? Why?

LESSON 86. CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY

THINKING INDEPENDENTLY

The Quran teaches us to think for ourselves when we read sign: *There is no compulsion in religion. Surely right judgment has become clear from error....* (2:256) that says that there is no compulsion in religion (*din*).

With this sign from God's point of view, we learn that it is up to each of us to have a close read of the Quran and decide whether or not to follow it. From reading the Quran with a critical mind, we learn how right judgment is clear from error. If we develop the following Quranic strategies or principles, and then practice the application of the principles, we will enhance our sense of intuition and insight. We will enhance our ability to reflect on our beliefs and actions. Quranic thinking encourages autonomous thinking, thinking for ourselves. We acquire many of our beliefs at an early age when we have a strong tendency to form beliefs for irrational reasons (because we want to believe, because we are rewarded for believing or punished for not doing so).

Quranic thinkers use critical skills and insights to reveal and eradicate beliefs to which they cannot rationally assent such as the beliefs of extremists. Quranic thinkers learn not to passively accept the beliefs of others; rather, they analyze issues themselves, reject unjustified authorities, and recognize the contributions of justified authorities. They thoughtfully form principles of thought and action; they do not mindlessly accept those presented to them. Nor are they unduly influenced by the language of another. If they find that a set of categories or distinctions is more appropriate than that suggested by another, they will use it. Recognizing that categories serve human purposes, the use those categories which best serve their purpose at the time. They are nc limited by accepted ways of doing things. They evaluate both goals and how to achieve them. They do not accept as true, or reject as false, beliefs they do not understand. They are not easily manipulated.

Independent thinkers strive to incorporate all known relevant knowledge and insight into their thought and behavior. They strive to determine for themselves when information is relevant, when to apply a concept, or when to make use of a skill. They are self-monitoring: they catch their own mistakes; they don't need to be told what to do every step of the way.

The purpose or goal needs to be understood when you concern yourselves with accuracy and truth. You should ask yourself:

What evidence do I have to support this purpose?
How it can be explained to help others understand?
Can objections be raised from other points of view?
Are there any limitations to our point if view?

In the Quranic view, there is no compelling of ourselves or others to whatever it is that a person believes. This is what the Quran calls: "right judgment

that is clear from error". It is free of being compelled to believe something.

It is possible to believe something because those around us believe in it or because someone has rewarded us for believing such-and-such. Or, it may be that our interests are best served by believing something or because someone is more comfortable believing this. It could also be that we believe in something because our ego and image of ourselves is defined by believing this-or-that. None of these reasons are that of a Quranic critical thinker because these reasons lack the evidence which the Quranic message provides. Each of us has to make up his or her own mind using 'right judgment' about what it is that we believe.

In order for students to be sure that their beliefs and actions are based on good reasons and evidence provided by the Quranic message, they need to be rational. They do this by critiquing their own irrationality which includes their own fears and desires. They are rational when they cultivate their desire for clarity, accuracy and fair-mindedness and, then, integrate them into their behavior and thoughts.

QURANIC CHAPTER 83: THE ONES WHO GIVE SHORT MEASURE (AL-MUTAFFIFIN)

Makkah: *Woe be to*
the ones who give short measure, (83:1)
those who when they measure against humanity
obtained full measure. (83:2)
Yet when they wanted to measure for them,
or weigh for them, they skimp. (83:3)
Think those not that they will be ones who are raised up (83:4)
on the sublime Day, (83:5)
a Day when humanity will stand up
for the Lord of the worlds? (83:6)
No indeed!
Truly, the Book of the ones who act immorally is in Sijjin. (83:7)
And what will cause you to recognize what Sijjin is? (83:8)
It is a written book. (83:9)
Woe on that Day to the ones who deny— (83:10)
those who deny the Day of Judgment! (83:11)
And none denies it but every sinful, exceeder of limits, (83:12)
who, when Our signs are recounted to him,
he said: Fables of the ancient ones! (83:13)
No indeed! Nay! Their hearts will be overcome with rust from what
they had been earning. (83:14)
No indeed! They will be from their Lord
on that Day ones who are alienated. (83:15)

Truly, again, they will be ones who roast in hellfire. (83:16)
Again, it will be said to them after that:
This is what you had been denying. (83:17)
No indeed! Truly, the book of the pious is in Illiyyun. (83:18)
And what will cause you to recognize what Illiyyun is? (83:19)
It is a written book. (83:20)
Bearing witness to it are
the ones who are brought near to God. (83:21)
Truly, the pious will be in bliss, (83:22)
on raised benches, looking on. (83:23)
Thou wilt recognize on their faces the radiancy of bliss. (83:24)
They will be given to drink sealed over exquisite wine. (83:25)
Its seal will have the lingering smell of musk.
So for that, then, the ones who strive, strive. (83:26)
And the mixture will be of Tasnim, (83:27)
a spring from which will drink
the ones who are brought near to it. (83:28)
Truly, those who sinned—at those who believed
—had been laughing. (83:29)
And when they passed by them,
they would wink at one another, (83:30)
and when they would turn about to their people,
they would turn about
acting as ones who are unconcerned. (83:31)
And when they saw them, they would say:
Truly, these are ones who go astray. (83:32)
They were sent as ones who guard over them. (83:33)
Then, on this Day, those who believed
laugh at the ones who are ungrateful, (83:34)
seated on raised benches, they look on. (83:35)
Were the ones who are ungrateful not rewarded
for what they had been accomplishing? (83:36)

COMMENTARY°

It has been recorded that this is the last chapter to be revealed in Makkah. The chapter opens with God's declaration of war against the stinters: *Woe be to the ones who give short measure.* The Arabic term, way, used for 'woe' implies destruction and ruin. The implication is the same whether we consider this sign as a statement of a future eventuality or a curse, for a curse made by God has the same effect as that of a statement about what is going to happen.

The next two signs explain the meaning of the 'stinters' or defrauders as intended in the chapter. *Those who when they measure*

against humanity obtained full measure. Yet when they wanted to measure for them, or weigh for them, they skimp. (83:2-83:3) They are those who want their merchandise complete and intact when they buy, but who do not give the right amount when they sell. The following three signs wonder at the defrauders, who behave as if they will not have to account for what they gain in this life.

The fact that the defrauders' behavior is tackled in this manner in a Makkan revelation is very interesting. Makkan chapters generally concentrate on the fundamentals, such as the assertion of God's unity, the supremacy of His will and His dominion over the universe and humanity, and with assertions about the truth of revelation and prophethood, the truth of the Day of Judgment, reckoning and reward. The Makkan revelations also endeavour to form and develop the moral sense and relate it to the fundamentals of faith. The tackling of a specific issue of morality, such as the stinting of weights and measures, or business dealings in general, is a later concern; it is more characteristic of Madinan revelations, which regulate the life of the community in an the Quranic message. The fact that this Makkan chapter makes the issue of stinting its focal point therefore deserves careful consideration.

The first point to note is that in Makkah the nobility were very rich, but totally unscrupulous. They exercised a complete monopoly of trade in their business concerns. They organized the export and import trade using caravans which travelled to Yemen in winter and to Syria in summer. They had their seasonal trade fairs such as the Ukaz fair which was held during the pilgrimage season. The fairs were for business dealings as well as literary activities.

The text suggests that the defrauders against whom war was declared belonged to the nobility and wielded much power and influence, enabling them to force others to succumb to their wishes. Several features of the Arabic wording used here connote that for some unspecified reason they were able to impose their will and exact in full. The meaning implied is not that they exacted their full due; for this would not justify a declaration of war against them. What is meant is that they obtained by sheer force what they had no right to demand. But when it was their turn to weigh or measure for others, they exercised their power by giving less than what was due.

Indeed this warning, coming so early in the Makkan period, gives an idea of the nature of the Quranic message. It demonstrates that the Quranic message embraces all sides of life and aims to establish a firm moral code which accords with the basic principles of divine teachings. At the time when this chapter was revealed the Muslim community was still weak. The followers of the Quranic

message had not yet won power in order to organize society and the life of the community according to Quranic principles. Yet the Quranic message demonstrated its opposition to those acts of flagrant injustice and unethical dealings. It declared war against stinters and threatened them with woe and destruction at a time when they were the powerful rulers of Makkah. It declared its uncompromising stand against the injustices suffered by the masses whom it has never sought to lull into a state of lethargy and apathy.

This gives us an insight into the real motives behind the stubborn opposition to the Quranic message by the masters of Makkah. They were undoubtedly keenly aware that what Muhammad was calling for was not merely a matter of personal conviction which demanded no more than a verbal assertion of God's Oneness and Muhammad's prophethood, and a form of prayer addressed to God and not idols. They realized that the new faith would establish a way of life which would cause the very basis of their positions and interests to crumble. They were fully aware that the new religion, by its very nature, did not admit any partnership or compromise with any worldly concepts alien to its divine basis, and that it posed a mighty threat to all tribal honor values. This is why they launched their offensive, which continued in full force both before and after the Muslims' migration to Madinah. It was an offensive launched to defend their way of life in its entirety, not only a set of concepts which have no effect beyond individual acceptance and personal conviction.

Those, in any age or land, who attempt to prevent the Qurani message from organizing and ruling human life also recognize these essential facts. They know very well that the pure and straightforward Quranic way of life endangers their unjust order, interests, hollow structure and deviant practices. Indeed the tyrannical stinters — whatever form their stinting takes and wherever it is, in money and finance, or in rights and duties — are those who fear most the ascendancy of the Quranic message and the implementation of its just methods.

The representatives of the two Arabian tribes of Madinah, the Aws and the Khazraj, who pledged their support and loyalty to the Prophet were also aware of all this. Ibn Ishaq, the Prophet's biographer, wrote: Asim ibn Umar ibn Qatadah told me that when the Madinan Muslims came to give their pledge to the Prophet, al-Abbas ibn Ubadah al-Ansari, who belonged to the clan of Salim ibn Awf, said to them: You Khazraj! Do you know what your pledge to this man really means?

They answered: Yes, we do.

His rejoinder was: You are pledging to fight the rest of humanity,

white and black alike! So it would be better to leave him alone now if you think you would give him up to his enemies in the event of your sustaining material losses or losing your leaders. If you do such a thing you will bring upon yourselves great humiliation both in this life and in the life hereafter. But if you feel that you will honor your pledges despite any sacrifice in money and men, then go ahead, because this will be best for you here and in the hereafter!

They said: We offer our loyalty and support and declare our readiness to sustain any sacrifice, material or personal!

Turning to the Prophet, they asked him: What will be our reward if we honor our pledges?

He said: Heaven.

They said: Stretch out your hand.

He did and they gave him their pledges of support.

These supporters, like the Makkan tyrants, were keenly aware of the nature of the Quranic message. They realized that it stands for absolute justice and fairness in the social order it seeks to create. It accepts no tyranny, oppression, conceit, injustice or exploitation. Therefore, it faces the combined forces of all forms of despotism, arrogance and exploitation.

Their attitude is singularly strange. (83:4-6) The mere idea of being raised to life again on that great day, when all humanity shall stand as ordinary individuals in front of the Lord of the universe, awaiting His just judgment, without support from any quarter, should be enough to make them change course. But they persist, as if the thought of being raised to life after death has never crossed their minds.

They are called ones who give short measure in the first part of the chapter; but in the second they are described as transgressors. The chapter proceeds to describe the standing of this group with God, their situation in this life, and what awaits them on the great day. (83:7-83:17) They think they will not be raised to life after death, so the Quran rebukes them and affirms that a record of their actions is kept.

The location of that record is specified as an additional confirmation of the fact, albeit a location unknown to man. They are threatened with woe and ruin on that day when their record shall be reviewed: (83:7-83:10)

The transgressors, as the Arabic term here connotes, are those who indulge excessively in sin. Their book is the record of their deeds. We do not know the nature of this book and nor are we required to know. The whole matter belongs to that realm of which we know nothing except what we are told by God. The statement that

there is a record in Sijjin of the transgressors' deeds, is followed by the familiar Quranic form of expression associated with connotations of greatness: *And what will cause you to recognize what Sijjin is?* (83:8) Thus, the addressee is made to feel that the whole matter is too great to be fully understood.

The chapter then gives a further account of the transgressors' book: *It is a written book.* (83:9) There is no possibility of addition or omission until it is thrown open on that great day. When this takes place: *Woe on that Day to the ones who deny.* (83:10) Then we are given information about the subject of unbelief, and the true character of the ungrateful who deny the Day of Judgment. (83:12-83:13) So, aggression and bad deeds lead the perpetrators to deny the Day of Judgment and to take a rude and ill-mannered attitude towards the Quran, describing it as: Fables of the ancients! This description by the ungrateful is, of course, based on the fact that the Quran contains some historical accounts of former nations. These accounts are related as a lesson for later generations as they demonstrate with much clarity the working of the divine rules to which all nations and generations are subject.

They are strongly rebuked and reprobated for their rudeness and rejection of the truth. These connotations, carried by the Arabic term kalla, translated here as 'No indeed', are coupled with an assertion that their allegations are unfounded. We are then given an insight into the motives of their insolent disbelief and the reasons for their inability to see the obvious truth or respond to it: *No indeed! Nay. Their hearts will be overcome with rust from what they had been earning.* (83:14) Indeed the hearts of those who indulge in sin become dull, as if they are veiled by a thick curtain which keeps them in total darkness, unable to see the light. Thus they gradually lose their sensitivity and become lifeless.

Thus we have learnt the situation of transgressing ungrateful, as well as their motives for transgression and rejection of the truth. Then we are told what will happen to them on that great day, a destiny which befits their evil deeds and denial of the truth: (83:15-83:17) Because their sins have cast a thick veil over their hearts, they are unable in this life to feel God's presence, and it is only appropriate that they not be allowed to see His glorious face. They will be deprived of this great happiness, which is bestowed only on those whose hearts and souls are so clean and transparent that they deserve to be with their Lord, without any form of separation or isolation.

This separation from their Lord is the greatest and most agonizing punishment and deprivation. It is a miserable end of a man whose very humanity is derived from only one source, namely his contact with God, his benevolent Lord. When man is torn away from this source of nobleness he loses all his humanity and sinks to a level

which ensures hell is his just reward: *Truly, again, they will be ones who roast in hellfire.* (83:16) On top of this, there is something much worse and much more agonizing, namely, rebuke. *Again, it will be said to them after that: This is what you had been denying.* (83:17)

Then follows an account of the other group, the God-conscious. This is given in the customary Quranic manner of providing two elaborately contrasting images, so that a detailed comparison may be drawn: (83:18-83:28)

This section of the chapter starts with the Arabic term, kalla, which connotes strong reproach and a firm command to the transgressors to desist from their rejection of the truth. It then proceeds to speak about the God-conscious. Since the record of the transgressors is in Sijjin, that of the God-conscious is in Illiyun. The term 'God-conscious' refers to the obedient who do good. They are the exact opposite of the transgressors, who indulge in every excess. The name Illiyun connotes elevation and sublimity, which suggests that Sijjin is associated with baseness and ignominy. The name is followed by the form of exclamation often used in the Quran to cast notions of mystery and grandeur: *And what will cause you to recognize what Illiyyun is?* (83:19)

The chapter then states that the book of the God-conscious is: *t is a written book. Bearing witness to it are the ones who are brought near to God.* (83:20-83:21) We have already stated what is meant by 'a record inscribed.' We are told here that the angels closest to God see this book and witness it. This statement gives the feeling that the record of the God-conscious is associated with nobility, purity and sublimity. The angels closest to God look at it and enjoy its description of noble deeds and glorious characteristics. The whole image provides evidence of the honor the God-conscious receive.

There follows an account of the situation in which the God-conscious find themselves. We are told of the bliss they enjoy on that great day: *Truly, the pious will be in bliss.* (83:22) This contrasts with hell, in which the transgressors dwell. *On raised benches, looking on.* (83:23) This means that they are given a place of honor. They look wherever they wish. They do not have to look down, out of humility; and they suffer nothing which distracts their attention. The description here represents to the Arabs, who were the first to be addressed by the Quran, the highest form of comfort and luxury.

In their bliss, the God-conscious live in mental and physical comfort. Their faces are radiant with unmistakable joy: (83:24-83:26) Their drink is absolutely pure without any unwanted additions or particles of dust. Describing it as securely sealed with musk indicates, perhaps, that it is ready made in secured containers to be

opened when refreshment is needed. All this adds to the impression of meticulous care being taken. The fact that the seal is of musk also adds an element of elegance and luxury. The whole picture, however, is understood only within the limits of human experience in this world.

In the life to come people will have different concepts, tastes and standards which will be free from all the bonds of this limited world.

The description is carried further in the following two signs: *And the mixture will be of Tasnim, a spring from which will drink the ones who are brought near to it.* (83:27-83:28) o, this pure, securely sealed drink is opened and mixed with a measure of the water from a fountain called Tasnim and described as the one from which the favored who are close to God drink. Before this last part of the description is given we are also given a significant instruction: *Its seal will have the lingering smell of musk.* (83:26)

Those stinters who defraud their fellow men pay no regard to the Day of Judgement, and, worse still, deny that such a Day of Reckoning will come. Hardened by their sins and excesses, they strive endlessly for the petty riches of this world. Each of them tries to outdo the others and gain as much as possible. Therefore, he indulges in all types of injustice and vice for the sake of ephemeral luxuries. It is the other type of luxury and honor which deserves emulous striving: *So for that, then, the ones who strive, strive.* (83:26)

Those who strive for an object of this world, no matter how superb, grand or honorable it is, are in reality striving for something hollow, cheap and temporary. This world, in its totality, is not worth, in God's view, one mosquito's wing. It is the hereafter which carries real weight with Him. So, it should be the goal for strenuous competition and zealous striving.

It is remarkable that striving for the hereafter elevates the souls of all strivers, while competition for worldly objects sinks the competitors' souls to the lowest depths. As we work continuously to achieve the happiness of the hereafter, our work makes this world a happy and pure one for everybody. On the other hand, efforts made for the achievement of worldly ends turn this world into a filthy marsh, where animals devour one another and insects bite the flesh of the God-conscious.

Striving for the hereafter does not turn the earth into a barren desert, as some transgressors imagine. The Quranic message considers this world a farm, and the hereafter its fruits. It defines the role of the true believer as the building of this world while following the path of piety and God-consciousness. The Quranic message stipu-

lates that we must look on our task as an act of worship that fulfils the purpose of his existence as defined by God: The statement: For this let the strivers emulously strive, inspires man to look far beyond this finite, little world, as he sets out to fulfil his mission as God's vicegerent on earth. Thus as they work on purifying the filthy marsh of this world their souls are elevated to new heights.

Our life on earth is limited while his future life is of limitless duration. The luxuries of this world are also limited while the happiness of paradise is much too great for us to conceive. The elements of happiness in this life are well known to everyone, but in the next world they are on a level befitting a life everlasting.

What comparison can then hold between the two spheres of competition or the two goals, even when we apply the human method of balancing losses against profits? It is, indeed, one race and a single competition: *So for that, then, the ones who strive, strive.* (83:26)

The beatitude enjoyed by the God-conscious is discussed at length in order to give a detailed account of the hardships, humiliation and insolence they are made to suffer at the hands of the transgressors. The final comment of the chapter taunts the ungrateful as they behold the God-conscious enjoying heavenly bliss: (83:29-83:36)

The images portrayed by the Quran of the evildoers' derision of the faithful, their rudeness and insolence, and their description of the faithful, as having 'gone astray' are taken directly from Makkan life at the time. But the same actions happen over and over again in all ages and places. Many people in our own age have witnessed similar actions, and it is as if the chapter was revealed to describe what they see with their own eyes. This proves that the attitude of the transgressors and the evildoers to the believers hardly ever changes from one country to another or from one period of time to another.

In the Arabic original, the past tense is used here so as to take us away from this world to the hereafter to see the God-conscious in their bliss while we also hear what happened to them in this world. *Truly, those who sinned—at those who believed—had been laughing.* (83:29) The believers were made to suffer ridicule and derision by the transgressors, either because they were poor or weak or because their self-respect would not allow them to return the abuse of base evildoers. What a contrast: the evildoers persecute the believers and laugh at them shamelessly while the believers stick to dignified self respect and perseverance.

They wink at one another: *And when they passed by them, they would wink at one another* (83:30) or make certain actions intended as mockery and derision. Such behavior betrays their baseness and

bad manners. They try to make the believers feel embarrassed and helpless. *And when they passed by them, they would wink at one another.* When they have nourished their evil, little minds with such mockery and injurious actions they go back to their own folk to continue their laughter and derision. They are satisfied with what they have done. Although they have sunk to the lowest depths, they cannot imagine how contemptible they are.

This is even more singular! *And when they saw them, they would say: Truly, these are ones who go astray.* (83:32) Nothing is more absurd than that those transgressors should speak about right and error, or that they should say that the believers have gone astray. Transgression knows no limits. The transgressors never feel ashamed of what they do or say. Their description of the believers as having gone astray is a clear manifestation of this fact. The Quran does not try to defend the believers or refute the evil accusation levelled at them, because it is not worth refuting. It laughs loudly, however, at those who involve themselves impudently in something which does not concern them: *They were sent as ones who guard over them.* (83:33) No one has asked them to look after the believers, or to watch over them, or to assess their situation. So why do they give their unsolicited opinion?

This sarcasm concludes the narration of what the transgressors do in this life. The chapter relates it as if it is something of the past, and gives an image of the present, i.e. in the hereafter, when the believers rejoice in their heavenly bliss: (83:34-83:35)

On that day the ungrateful will be shut out from their Lord, suffering isolation combined with the torture of hell when they are told: *Again, it will be said to them after that: This is what you had been denying.* (83:17) At the other end of the scale, the believers recline on couches, in total beatitude, partaking of a pure drink which is secured with a seal of musk and mixed with the waters of Tasnim. As the chapter draws the two images, it shows how the tables are turned; for then it is the believers who laugh at the ungrateful.

The chapter concludes with another loud, ironic question: *Were the ones who are ungrateful not rewarded for what they had been accomplishing?* (83:36) Their requital is not a good one, as the term used here connotes. For we have just been given an image of their doom, which is described here sarcastically, as their reward.

The scene of the evildoers' ridicule of the believers merits further discussion. It is portrayed in considerable detail, in the same way as the earlier scene of the God-conscious in heavenly bliss. This detailed description is highly artistic. It also has a marked psychological effect which is at once soothing, comforting and reassuring. The

Muslim minority in Makkah was facing a sustained, demoralizing onslaught by the ungrateful, but God did not leave the Muslims on their own: He comforted them and urged them to persevere.

They are comforted by the very fact that their sufferings are outlined by God in detail. He sees what the believers suffer and does not ignore what He sees, although He may let the ungrateful do as they wish, if only for a while. He also sees how the transgressors laugh unrepentantly at the sufferings of the faithful. Since He describes all this in the Quran then He must take it into account. This, in itself, is enough consolation for the believers.

There are also those scornful remarks about the evildoers. They may go unnoticed by the ungrateful because their indulgence in their sinful practices have made them insensitive. The highly sensitive hearts of the believers, however, are touched and comforted by them.

It must be noted that the only consolation offered by God to the believers who were subjected to harsh treatment and painful ridicule was heaven for the believers and hell for the ungrateful. This, again, was the only promise the Prophet made to the believers when they pledged all their property as well as their lives for the cause of the Quranic message. Victory in this life was never mentioned in the Makkan Quranic revelations as a consolation or as an incentive to persevere. The Quran was instead cultivating the hearts of the believers, and preparing them to fulfil the task with which they were entrusted. It was necessary that such hearts attain a high standard of strength and self-denial so that they would give everything and suffer all hardship without looking for anything in this life. They were to seek only the reward of the hereafter and to win God's pleasure. They were prepared to go through life suffering all sorts of hardship and deprivation with no promise of reward in this life, not even victory for the cause of the Quranic message.

Such a group of people must be first established. When this happens and God knows that they are sincere and determined in what they have pledged themselves to do, then He will give them victory in this life. Victory will not be theirs as a personal reward. They will be given power as trustees appointed for the implementation of the Quranic way of life. They will be worthy trustees because neither were they promised nor did they look for any worldly gain. They pledged themselves truly to God at a time when they were unaware of any worldly benefit that may befall them except that they would win God's pleasure.

All the Quranic signs which speak of victory were revealed later in Madinah when this was no longer an issue. Victory was given because God willed that successive human generations should have an

actual, definite and practical example of the Quranic way of life. It was not a reward for sacrifices made or hardships suffered.

Student Assessment

Example of How Critical Thinking Works

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

Developing Quranic Critical Thinking Skills

Quranic content is understood by thinking, organized by thinking, analyzed by thinking, synthesized by thinking, evaluated by thinking, transformed by thinking.

You will learn that the Quran teaches you HOW to think through reading it, writing it, speaking it and listening (hearing) to it in any language with which you are familiar. Of course, it is best if this is done with the original Arabic revelation, but not knowing Quranic Arabic should not stop you from learning HOW to think Quranically. It is so powerful, it should come across in any language in which it has been well translated, that is, a translation as close as possible to the original, but making sense (not a literal, word-by-word) or a wordy interpretation for each sign rather than a translation. In reading it, dialogue with it by asking yourself: What is the purpose of this passage? Do I understand what is being said? When I read these signs, I work on the text, take it apart, predict it, test it. It is a very difficult process, very labor in tensive. This is close reading. What's worth reading is worth reading well.

Write out a part in your own words in order to better understand it, not of course, to try to compete with it. Ask yourself if you can reformulate it, elaborate on it and give an example. Speak about it. To communicate well, you need to know your audience and what it is that you want to say. In order for listening (hearing) to be effective, it must be active.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I am able to raise basic issues.
I am probing beneath the surface of things.
I am discovering the structure of my own thought.
I am developing sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
I am arriving at judgments through my own reasoning.
I am learning to listen carefully to what others in my class say.

I am taking what others in my Quranic class say seriously.
I am beginning to look for reasons and evidence.
I am recognizing and reflecting on assumptions.
I am seeking examples, analogies and objections.
I am seeking to be empathetic to the Quranic point of view.
I am looking under the surface of things for the
meaning of the Quranic message.

APPENDIX 1
SIGNS REVEALED IN MAKKAH AND PLACED IN MADINAH CHAPTERS
SIGNS 8:30-8:36

MAKKAH: *And mention when those who were ungrateful*
plan against you to bring you
to a standstill or to kill you
or to drive you out.
And they plan and God plans,
but God is Best of the ones who plan. (8:30)
And when Our signs are recounted to them,
they said: We heard this. If we will,
we would say the like of this.
Truly, this is only fables of ancient ones. (8:31)
And when they said: O God!
Truly, if this had been The Truth from Thee,
rain down rocks on us from heaven
or bring us a painful punishment. (8:32)
But God had not been punishing them
with you among them.
Nor had God been One Who Punishes them
while they ask for forgiveness. (8:33)
And what is with them
hat God should not punish the
while they bar worshipers from the Masjid al-Hara
and they had not been its protectors:
Truly, its protectors are but ones who are God-conscious
except most of them know not. (8:34)
Their formal prayer at the House had been nothing
but whistling and clapping of hands.
So experience the punishment
because you had been ungrateful. (8:35)
Truly, those who were ungrateful spend their wealth
so that they bar the way of God.
They will spend it.
Again, it will become a regret for them.
Again, they will be vanquished.
And those who were ungrateful
will be assembled in hell. (8:36)

COMMENTARY°

These signs continue the Quranic address showing glimpses from the past and compares them with the present. It paints a scene showing a great gulf between the two situations for the benefit of the Muslim community. Thus Muslims are able to appreciate God's grace as manifested in what He had planned for them.

In the present passage, the signs describes the attitude of the ungrateful as they scheme against God's Messenger shortly before his departure to Madinah. They turn away from God's revelations, claiming that they could produce something similar if they so wished. Their attitude is so stubborn that they appeal for God's punishment to come sooner if Muhammad's message from God is true. They prefer this to accepting it and following its guidance. The passage also includes a reference to the fact that they allocate their resources so as to turn people away from God's guidance and pool their money in order to launch an onslaught on God's Messenger. They are warned that all their efforts will end in total failure in this life, and then they will be driven to hell in the life to come. Loss in both worlds will be the result of their scheming and plotting.

Ultimately God directs the Messenger to confront the ungrateful with a choice between two alternatives. The first is that they stop their stubborn denial of the truth and their hostility to God and His Messenger, in which case God will forgive them all the sins and evil deeds they committed in the past. Alternatively, they continue with their attitude, in which case the fate that engulfed earlier communities will befall them too. They will then suffer the punishment God will determine for them.

A SCHEME TO PUT AN END TO THE QURANIC MESSAGE

And they plan and God plans, but God is Best of the ones who plan.(8:30) This is a reminder of the situation in Makkah before things underwent a total transformation. This reminder serves also as a reassurance concerning the future, and draws attention to the wisdom behind the operation of God's will. Those Muslims who were the first to be addressed by the Quran were fully aware of both situations, having experienced both. A reminder of their immediate past, as well as the fear and worry they experienced in those days, was sufficient to make them appreciate the safety and security of the present. They were aware of the ungrateful' scheming and what they planned to do with the Prophet. But not only their schemes were totally foiled; the ungrateful also suffered a humiliating defeat.

The ungrateful were considering alternatives: they thought of arresting God's Messenger and putting him in chains until he died,

and they also considered killing him so that they could get rid of him once and for all. They also thought of driving him away, sending him into exile. Having considered the pros and cons of each of these alternatives, they chose to kill him, entrusting the task to a number of young men, each belonging to a different tribe, so that all tribes would share in his assassination. His own clan, Hashim, would thus be unable to fight all the Arabs at once. They would then accept an offer of blood money and the whole matter would finish at that.

Commenting on this sign, Imam Ahmad relates on the authority of Abd Allah ibn Abbas: The Quraysh were in consultation one night in Makkah. Some of them suggested that the following morning they should put the Messenger in chains; but others suggested that they should kill him, while still others suggested that it was sufficient to have him banished. God revealed to the Messenger what they were scheming. That night, Ali slept in the Prophet's bed, while the Messenger moved out of the city until he reached the cave. The ungrateful spent the night watching Ali, but thinking him to be the Prophet. In the morning, they rushed to him, but instead they discovered Ali sleeping in his bed. They realized that their scheming had been foiled. They asked him: Where is your companion? He answered: I do not know. They traced his footsteps, but when they reached the mountain, they could no longer distinguish his trace. They climbed up the mountain and passed by the cave and saw that spiders had weaved their webs over its entrance. They thought that if he had gone into the cave, there would be no spider's web at the entrance. All in all he stayed in that cave three nights."

And they plan and God plans, but God is Best of the ones who plan.(8:30) These words paint a picture that leaves a profound effect, particularly when we stretch our minds to imagine that meeting of Quraysh idolaters and how they held their consultations discussing alternatives, looking at the advantages and disadvantages of every suggestion that was put forward. Yet, God Almighty was fully aware of all they said and decided. He rendered their schemes futile, but they were totally unaware of His planning. The whole scene is full of acute irony. But it is at the same time an awe-inspiring scene. How could those human beings, weak and clumsy as they were, be compared to God? Could anything they devised be compared to His design, able as He is to accomplish every purpose of His? The Quranic style paints this image in the same inimitable method of the Quran, bringing it alive so that it shakes hearts and set minds thinking.

After this brief but highly suggestive reference to the scheming of the Quraysh and what they plotted against the Prophet, the sign moves on to describe the attitude of the ungrateful, their deeds, fab-

rications and claims. They went as far as claiming they were able to produce something similar to the Quran, if only they chose to do so. At the same time, they described the Quran as fables of the ancients. (8:31) *And when Our signs are recounted to them, they said: We heard this. If we will, we would say the like of this. Truly, this is only fables of ancient ones.*

Feeble Maneuvers

In his commentary on the Quran, Ibn Kathir mentions that the person who said this was al-Nadr ibn al-Harith: Al-Nadr had been to the Persian Empire where he learnt Persian history and read accounts of past Persian kings, such as Rustam and Isfandiyar. When he returned home, he saw God's Messenger after he had been entrusted with God's message, and he listened to him reciting the Quran to people. When the Messenger finished talking to any group of people, al-Nadr would sit with them and tell them stories of those ancient kings. He would then ask them: Tell me, by God, who tells better stories: I or Muhammad?' Therefore, when he fell captive on the day of the Battle of Badr, the Messenger ordered that he should be executed. His order was carried out, thank God.

It was in reference to al-Nadr and what he used to say about the Quran that this sign was revealed: *And when Our signs are recounted to them, they said: We heard this. If we will, we would say the like of this. Truly, this is only fables of ancient ones.* (8:31)

The ungrateful' claims that the Quran was nothing but the tales of ancient people is mentioned several times in the Quran. In another place we read: *And they say: Fables of the ancient ones that he has caused to be written down! And they are to be related from memory to him at early morning dawn and at eventide.* (25:5)

This was only one episode in a chain of maneuvres which they attempted in order to resist the Quran and stop its profound effect. They realized that the Quran put its address to human nature, based on the truth implanted in its very constitution. Therefore, its response was bound to be positive. It confronted minds with its overpowering authority and they yielded to its irrefutable logic. Therefore, the elders of the Quraysh concocted some maneuvre which they knew to be without foundation. Nevertheless, they tried to find in the Quran something similar to the fables and legends of ancient communities in order to spread confusion among the masses. Their aim was simply to maintain their sway over those masses.

Those elders of the Quraysh recognized the nature of the Quranic message, because they were fully aware of the meaning of its terms and expressions in their language.

They recognized that the declaration, 'there is no god but God,

and the Messenger is God's Messenger,' signified a rebellion against all human authority, a complete rejection of the sovereignty of human beings and an acknowledgement that all sovereignty belonged to God alone. It also signified that putting such submission into practice meant following the teachings of Prophet Muhammad, God's Messenger, to the exclusion of all those who claimed to speak for God. They were aware that those of them who made that declaration rebelled immediately against the Quraysh's authority, leadership and sovereignty. Without hesitation, they joined the community led by the Prophet, acknowledging his authority. They no longer entertained any feeling of loyalty to family, clan, tribe, leadership or human authority. All their loyalty was given to this new leadership and the community under its care.

This is certainly the true significance of the declaration that there is no god other than God and that Muhammad is God's Messenger. This was a reality witnessed by the elders of the Quraysh who recognized the threat it constituted to their social, political, economic and religious set-up. The new Muslims' declaration did not have the hollow and feeble significance demonstrated by those who nowadays claim to be Muslims. They make such a claim only because they repeat this declaration verbally and offer some worship rituals. However, they pay little heed to the fact that God's Lordship no longer has any practical significance in human life, since human beings allow man-made laws and ignorant leadership to conduct and manage all society affairs.

It is true that in Makkah, the Messenger had neither a legal code to put forward nor a state to implement such a code, had it been there. However, those who made the declaration that brought them into the fold of the Quranic message immediately acknowledged the leadership of the Messenger and gave all their loyalty to the Muslim community. They rebelled against the leadership of the Arabian *jahiliyyah* society, and disclaimed any loyalty to family, clan, tribe, etc. Therefore, their declaration had its true political significance.

This was indeed what worried the Quraysh's elders as they recognized the threat posed by the Quranic message.

In earlier days, they were not at all worried when some individuals of foresight disowned the beliefs and rituals of the ungrateful, declaring that they believed in God's Oneness and worshipped Him alone. Those individuals disowned all idolatry, offering no worship ritual to any of the Arabian idols. If the whole matter is confined to this, those who wield authority in any *jahiliyyah* society would not care, because they do not see any threat to their authority in mere beliefs and worship rituals.

A SOPHISTICATED VERSION OF AN OLD PLOY

A fable is an old tale that includes some superstitious beliefs about deities and the supernatural courage of legendary heroes. It speaks of imaginary events that involve so much superstition.

Those Quraysh elders referred to the accounts given in the Quran of earlier nations and communities, the miracles shown to them and to the Quranic descriptions of how God destroyed the ungrateful and saved the believers and said to the masses that such accounts were only fables of ancient people. They alleged that the Messenger had it all written down in order to relate the same to the Arabs in Makkah, claiming that they had been revealed to him by God. Al-Nadr ibn al-Harith would take the Prophet's place after he had finished speaking to people, and would relate to them fables and legends which he had learnt on his travels in Persia. At times, al-Nadr would even have a group of people in a circle sitting next to the group addressed by the Prophet. He would then say to his audience: These legends are similar to the fables related by Muhammad, but I do not claim to be a Prophet or to receive any revelations. His are all fables and legends of the same type.

However, such matters did not last long in Makkah. These ploys were seen for what they really were. With its overpowering logic and profound truth that directly appealed to human nature, the Quran could easily overcome all such ploys and maneuvres. Nothing of them was able to resist the Quran in any way. Therefore, the elders of the Quraysh were in terrible fear and called on all their followers: *And those who are ungrateful said: Hear not this, the Quran, but talk idly about it while it is being recited so that perhaps you would prevail.* (41:26) But their leaders, such as Abu Sufyan, Abu Jahl and al-Akhnas ibn Shariq went secretly at night, each on his own, to listen to the Quran being recited. None of them could bring himself to refrain from being there night after night, to listen to the Messenger as he recited God's revelations. Each one of them thought he was totally alone. When they discovered each other, they made a firm pledge of honor not to do it again. They feared that they would be seen by young people who would then listen to the Quran and accept the Quranic message.

Al-Nadr's attempt to attract people's attention to his stories in order to turn them away from the Quran was not the last of its kind. It was repeated in different shapes and forms, and it will continue to be repeated. In our present times, the enemies of this faith have also tried to turn people's attentions away from the Quran. But when they realize that all their attempts end in failure, they try to reduce the Quran to a collection of hymns that reciters sing to enchant their au-

dience.

NO LIMIT TO HUMAN FOLLY

The signs goes on to describe an attitude of most amazing stubbornness by the ungrateful. They try to wrestle with the truth and they are defeated. Pride, however, prevents them from acknowledging the truth and its authority or submitting to it. Therefore, they appeal to God to rain down stones over them or to smite them with grievous suffering, if the Quran were the truth revealed by Him. Instead of praying to God to guide them to the truth and enable them to follow it, they pray for their own undoing: *And when they said: O God! Truly, if this had been The Truth from You rain down rocks on us from heaven or bring us a painful punishment.* (8:32)

This is certainly a very strange appeal which betrays a state of unwavering stubbornness that prefers total ruin to yielding to the truth, even when it is the absolute truth. When sound human nature experiences doubt, it prays to God to show it the truth and guide it to it. Sound human nature does not find that at all demeaning. But when it is corrupted by uncontrolled pride, arrogance drives it into sin to the extent that it prefers suffering and ruin to acknowledging the truth when it becomes clear, irrefutable. It is with this type of obstinacy that the ungrateful in Makkah resisted the Prophet's message. But this message was victorious in the end, despite such persistent obstinacy.

The chapter makes it clear that they certainly deserved that stones be rained on them from the skies, or that painful suffering be inflicted on them, just as they had prayed for. Nevertheless, God willed not to inflict on them the type of extermination He had inflicted on earlier communities. This is because God's Messenger was still in their midst, calling on them to follow His guidance. Nor would God punish them for their sins if they continued to seek forgiveness after committing them.

It is untrue that their punishment was postponed because they were the guardians of the Sacred Mosque. Indeed, they were not its true guardians, because its rightful guardians are those who are God-conscious: (8:33-35)

What delays their punishment is not their claim that they are the heirs of Abraham and the custodians of the Sacred Mosque. This is merely a claim that has no substance or foundation. They are not the owners or the guardians of this House of worship, i.e. the Kabah. Indeed, they are its enemies. God's Sacred Mosque, the Kabah, is not a place of property which one generation inherits from its predecessor. It is God's own house which is inherited by those who are God-

conscious. False also is their claim that they are the heirs of the Messenger Abraham. It is not through blood and lineage that Abraham's legacy is inherited. It is only inherited through faith and religion. Those who are God-conscious are the only ones to inherit Abraham and the House he built for God's sake. But those ungrateful were turning away from it, its true guardians who believed in Abraham's faith. Therefore, they could not be guardians of this Sacred Mosque, although they may offer their prayers there. Indeed, theirs is not a true prayer. It was no more than whistling and hand clapping. It involved much chaos that imparted no air of serenity or atmosphere of humility before God. It did not inspire any feeling of sacredness of that mosque.

Abd Allah ibn Umar says: They used to place their cheeks on the ground, whistling and clapping. This brings to mind the image of musicians who produce a great deal of noise, and who put their heads at the feet of those in high position in many countries which claim to be Muslim. This is no more than an aspect of *jahiliyyah* that is highlighted here. It is shown here after a clear picture of *jahiliyyah* has been raised, showing how people impose a sort of divine authority on earth, and claim sovereignty over people. When this type of *jahiliyyah* occurs, all other forms and styles of ignorance may follow.

Their formal prayer at the House had been nothing but whistling and clapping of hands. So experience the punishment because you had been ungrateful. (8:35) This refers to the suffering inflicted on them at the hands of the Muslim community. As for the suffering they prayed for, which involves extermination, it is simply postponed by God's mercy, as a gesture of honor to God's Messenger and his great position. It may be that they will eventually repent what they have been doing and pray to God to forgive them.

SEPARATING THE GOOD FROM THE BAD

It is a common characteristic of ungrateful that they spend their money to cooperate in turning people away from God's path. God warns them that their purpose will be foiled and that they will come to find the loss of their money. He promises them defeat in this life and the punishment of hell in the life to come: *Truly, those who were ungrateful spend their wealth so that they bar the way of God. They will spend it. Again, it will become a regret for them. Again, they will be vanquished. And those who were ungrateful will be assembled in hell.* (8:36)

Signs: 9:128-9:129

Certainly, there drew near to you a Messenger
from among yourselves.
It was grievous to him that you fell into misfortune.
He is anxious for you
and to the ones who believe, gentle, compassionate. (9:128)
But if they turned away, say: God is enough for me.
There is no god but He.
In Him I put my trust.
And He is the Lord of the Sublime Throne. (9:129)

Commentary°

The Prophet's Relationship with the Believers

These signs concludes with two signs which different reports suggest were revealed in Makkah. The first of these two signs explains the bond between God's Messenger and his people, and how compassionate and full of concern he was for them. This is perfectly fitting with the tasks assigned to the Muslim community who are required to support the Messenger, convey his message, fight his enemies and endure whatever trouble or hardship they may face in doing so. The final sign directs the Messenger to rely only on his Lord when people turn away from him. It is sufficient for him to have God's help and support. (9:128-129)

The statement here does not say 'a Messenger from among you' has come to you. Instead it describes the Messenger as being one 'from among yourselves' to add connotations of closer contact and firmer ties. It shows the type of bond that exists between them and their Messenger. He is one of them, with very close contact between them, and he feels for them. Another characteristic of this Messenger is that: *It was grievous to him that you fell into misfortune.* (9:128) He is keen that you should come to no hardship. He is also *He is anxious for you and to the ones who believe, gentle, compassionate.* (9:128) He would never lead you to ruin. If he calls on you to strive for God's cause, and to endure any difficulty in doing so, then you should know that he does not take this lightly, and that there is no cruelty in his heart. His call is a manifestation of compassion. He simply does not like to see you humiliated. He is too concerned that you should not suffer the ignominy of sin. He is keen that you should have the honor of conveying this message, earn God's pleasure and admittance into heaven. The signs then addresses the Prophet, showing him what attitude to take when people turn away from him and

his message. It points to the source of power which gives him all the protection he needs: *But if they turned away, say: God is enough for me. There is no god but He. In Him I put my trust. And He is the Lord of the Sublime Throne* (9:129) To Him belong all power, dominion, greatness and honor. His support is sufficient for everyone who seeks His patronage.

These signs which concentrate mainly on fighting and striving for God's cause is thus concluded with the directive to rely on God alone, trust Him and seek His powerful support. After all: *He is the Lord of the Sublime Throne.* (9:129)

APPENDIX 3: CORRELATION BETWEEN THE PRESENT ORDER OF CHAPTERS IN THE QURAN AND THEIR CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

1 = 96
2 = 68
3 = 73
4 = 74
5 = 1
6 = 111
7 = 81
8 = 87
9 = 92
10 = 89
11 = 93
12 = 94
13 = 103
14 = 100
15 = 108
16 = 102
17 = 107
18 = 109
19 = 105
20 = 113
21 = 114
22 = 112
23 = 53
24 = 80
25 = 97
26 = 91
27 = 85
28 =95
29 = 106
30 = 101
31 = 75
32 = 104
33 = 77
34 = 50
35 = 90
36 = 86
37 = 54
38 = 38
39 = 7
40 = 72
41 = 36
42 = 25
43 = 35
44 = 19
45 = 20
46 = 56
47 = 26
48 = 27
49 = 28
50 = 17
51 = 10
52 = 11
53 = 12
54 = 15
55 = 6
56 = 37
57 = 31
57 = 34
59 = 39
60 = 40
61 = 41
62 = 42
63 = 43
64 = 44
65 = 45
66 = 46
67 = 51
68 = 88
69 = 18
70 = 16
71 = 71
72 = 14
73 = 21
74 = 23
75 = 32
76 = 52
77 = 67
78 = 69
79 = 70
80 = 78
81 = 79
82 = 82
83 = 84
84 = 30
85 = 29
86 = 83
87 = 2
88 = 8
89 = 3
90 = 33
91 = 60
92 = 4
93 = 99
94 = 57
95 = 47
96 = 13
97 = 55
98 = 76
99 = 65
100 = 78
101 = 59
102 = 24
103 = 22
104 = 63
105 = 58
106 = 49
107 = 66
108 = 64
109 = 61
110 = 62
111 = 48
112 = 5
113 = 9
114 = 110

NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION TO QURANIC THINKING BY HASHIM KAMALI

1. The rough equation that earlier Muslim scholars drew between the Islamic and Western conceptions of reason tended to be oblivious of the categories of reason and the Western critique of reason that divided it into "instrumental reason, critical reason, functional reason, abstract reason, imperialist reason, decentering reason" and the like. For details see Abdelwahab M. Elmessiri, "Features of the New Islamic Discourse," a Cairo conference paper, 1997: http:// www.21stcenturytrust.org/messiri.doc.

2. Some commentators have distinguished a total of 30 expressions that revolve around thinking over the *ayat*. See Abu Bakr al-Razi, *Tafsir al-Kabir* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1985), II, 222f.

3. Cf Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-'Ilm fi'l-Quran al-Karim* (Cairo: Maktaba Wahba, 1416/1996), 36.

4. Al-Isfahani, *Mufradat Alfaz al-Qur'an*, under "*Fikr*".

5. Cf., Karim Douglas Crow, "Islam and Reason" in *Al-Shajarah*, vol. 8, (2003),120-1.

6. Abbas Mahmud, "al-Agqad, Al-Tafkir Faridah Islamiyyah" (Thinking is an Islamic Obligation) quoted in Jamal Badi and Mustapha Tajdin, *Creative Thinking: An Islamic Perspective*, 2nd edn. (Kuala Lumpur: International Islamic University Malaysia, 2005), 6.

7. Cf. al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-'Ilm*, 41-45 quoting ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's *Miftah Dar al-Sa'ada*, and 'Agqad's book entitled *al-Tafkir Faridah Islamiyya* (Beirut: al-Matba'a al-'Asriyya, 1992).

8. Cf. al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-Ilm*, 200.

9. Cf .Ibid., 202.

10. Al-Raghib al-Isfahani, *Mufradat Alfaz al-Quran* (Beirut: Dar al-Shamiyya, 1383/1964), 249.

11. Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i, *al-Mizan fi-Tafsir al-Quran* (Beirut: al-Mu'assasa al-'Alami, 1383/1964) II, 395.

12. Ala uddin al-Mattagi al-Hindi, *Kanz al-Ummah fi Sunan al-Aqwal wa'l-Af'al* (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risalah, 1383/1981), hadith no. 5873.

13. Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali, *Risalat al-Radd 'ala al-Laduniyya*, ed. 'Abd Allah Riyad Mustafa, (Damascus: Dar al-Hikma, 1986), 241.

14. CE Ahmad Fu'ad al-Ahwani, *al-Tarbiyah fi'l-Islam* (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif bi-Misr, 1968), 227-228.

15. Cf. Aziz al-Azmeh, *Arabic Thought and Islamic Societies* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 109.

16. Cf. Diane F. Halpern, *Thought and Knowledge: An Introduction to Critical Thinking* (Mahwah: New Jersey, Lawrence Erlbaum and Associates, 1996), 21.

17. Cf. Ibrahim B. Syed, "Critical Thinking" as online at http://www.lrfi. org/articles/articles_101_150/critical_thinking.htm.

(18. Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Lahore: Shah Muhammad Ashraf, reprint 1982), 127.

19. Malik Bin Nabi, *Intaj al-Mustashriqin* (Cairo: Maktabah 'Amir, 1990), 34.

20. Iqbal, op. cit., 139.

21. See for details Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, *What's Right with Islam is What's*

Right with America (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2004), 4-5.

22. Georg W. H. Hegel, *Philosophy of History* (New York: Dove Books, 1956), 109.

23. Louay Safi, "The Creative Mission of the Muslim Minorities in the West: Synthesizing the Ethos of Islam and modernity," a conference paper presented at Westminster University, London, England February 21, 2004: http://insight.org/articles/Current/MuslimMinorities.htm.

24. Cf., M.H. Kamali, "Islam, Rationality and Science," in Islam and Science, vol. 1, no. 2 (2003), 126f, see also Mehdi Golshani, "Philosophy of Science from the Qur'anic Perspective," in *Towards Islamisation of Disciplines* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1989), 73f.

25. Cf. Ishfaq Ahmad, "Research and Development Culture in the Islamic World: Past and Present Problems and Future Directions," in Abu Bakr Abdul Majeed et al. (eds.) *New Knowledge, Research and Development in the Muslim World* (Kuala Lumpur: Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia, 2004), 14-15.

26. See for a discussion Oliver Leaman, "Institutionalising Research and Development Culture in the Islamic and Non-Islamic World: A Comparative Perspective," in Abu Bakr Majeed, (ed.) *New Knowledge*, 50-51.

27. Malik bin Nabi, *Intaj al-Mustashriqin*, 26.

28. See for details Mohammad Hashim Kamali, "Issues in the Understanding of Jihad and Ijtihad" in *Islamic Studies* 41 (2002), 623 ff.

29. There is a chapter on *ijtihad* in M. H. Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1991, 3rd edn. 2003). See also my article "Issues in the Understanding of Jihad and Ijtihad" in *Islamic Studies*, 41 (2002), 617-635; and "Issues in the Legal Theory and Usul and Prospects for Reform" in *Islamic Studies*, 40 (2001), 1-21.

30. Sergio Moravia. *The Enigma of the Mind: The Mind-Body Problem in Contemporary Thought*, tr. S. Staton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. First published in Rome, 1986), 4-5.

31. See for example, Howard Gardner, *Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligence for the 21st Century* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

32. See for details Roger Garudy, "The Balance Sheet of Western Philosophy in this Century" in *Towards Islamisation of Disciplines* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1989), 399f.

33. Mehdi Golshani, "From Knowledge to Wisdom: A Qur'anic Perspective," in *Islamic Studies*, 44 (2005), 13.

34. Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Fiqh al-Awlawiyyat*, 68.

35. Cf., Al-Ahwani, *al-Tarbiyah fi'l-Islam*, 189.

36. Mohammad Hashim Kamali is Professor of Islamic Law and jurisprudence at the International Islamic University Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur. "Reading the Signs," Center for Islam and Science. Gale Group, 2006.

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